Basic information

2007/2252(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Mid-term review of the European environment and health action plan 2004 - 2010 **Subject** 3.70 Environmental policy 4.20 Public health	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	RIES Frédérique (ALDE)	01/10/2007

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

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	DIMAS Stavros

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
11/06/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0314	Summary
29/11/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
27/05/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
18/06/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0260/2008	
04/09/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0410/2008	Summary
04/09/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
04/09/2008	Debate in Parliament		
04/09/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2252(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/51521

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE404.442	12/03/2008	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE404.728	14/04/2008	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0260/2008	18/06/2008	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0410/2008	04/09/2008	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2007)0314	11/06/2007	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2007)0777	11/06/2007	

Mid-term review of the European environment and health action plan 2004 - 2010

2007/2252(INI) - 11/06/2007 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present a mid-term review of the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010.

BACKGROUND: six out of ten European citizens consider that it is "very" or "fairly likely" that environmental pollution will damage their health and that the European Union is not doing enough. In order to address these concerns, the Commission adopted the European Environment and Health Strategy in June 2003 (see INI/2003/2222) which had 3 key objectives: (i) to reduce the disease burden caused by environmental factors in the EU; (ii) to identify and to prevent new health threats caused by environmental factors; (iii) to strengthen EU capacity for policymaking in this area. The Strategy was followed up by the European Environment and Health**Action Plan**2004-2010 (see INI/2004/2132), which emphasised the need to develop a good information base, including a coordinated approach to human biomonitoring, and the necessity to strengthen research on environment and health with the aim to make the assessment of the environmental impact on human health more efficient.

The new Sustainable Development Strategy adopted by the Council in June 2006 shows that the importance given to the impacts of the environment on public health is incorporated in Europe's vision for the future.

This Communication is part of the overall movement.

CONTENT: the purpose of this Communication is to review and to present the progress achieved at the **mid-term** of the Action Plan, to briefly describe the developments in the relevant policies referred to in the Action Plan such as chemicals, air, water and noise, and to highlight areas that should receive particular attention in the future.

Progress on the implementation of the Action Plan: the Action Plan identified 13 actions with a focus on (1) improving the information chain by developing integrated environment and health information; (2) filling the knowledge gap by strengthening research on environment and health and identifying emerging issues; (3) reviewing and adjusting risk reduction policy and improving communication. In these different areas the Commission notes that:

- **concerning improving the information chain**: there are many EU-wide environment and health monitoring and information systems which aim to improve the level of information and protection. The review aims to increase linkage and integration between existing systems in order to enhance efforts on research and human biomonitoring and improve data collection procedures;
- **concerning filling the knowledge gap**: several Community funded projects were launchedto integrate and strengthen EU environment and health research. Since 2004, the Commission has launchedtargeted research projects on diseases, disorders and exposures. **Community research** has focused on the causes of asthma and allergy, on the causes and mechanisms of neuro-immune disorders, on the health effects of exposure to metals, on the development of EU networks to promote research into uncommon cancers and on the identification of gene-environment interactions involved in the development of cancer. The aims for 2007-2010 are to study the causes of environment-related diseases and to investigate the long-term health impacts of exposure to environmental stressors. These projects will contribute to many EU policies concerning the assessment of risks of exposure to chemicals in particular. A series of other projects were launched to identify the potential hazards on the environment and health, in the field of climate change, water quality and risk assessment of nanotechnologies. For 2007-2010, the effects of climate change on human and animal health and the potential risks fromnanoparticles to human health will be investigated;
- **in terms of adjusting risk reduction policy and improving communication**: several projects linked to air quality were launched to reduce active and passive smoking. A project on electromagnetic field (EMF) issues built a network of EU policy makers on EMF issues. Educational materials on children's environment were produced to be used by trainers to improve the knowledge of professionals and personnel working in health care (including under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6)). Other measures have been put in place regarding respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, neurodevelopment disorders and endocrine related impacts. Significant progress has been made in better identification of the mechanisms for coordinating risk reduction measures. However, more work needs to be done in linking research on these priority diseases. At the same time, the Commission mandated the Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER) to deliver an opinion on a possible risk assessment strategy to support policy on the indoor air issue. The SCHER already issued a separate opinion on air fresheners in January 2006. Afterwards, an expert working group was established in October 2006 to follow up the opinions of the Scientific Committee and two FP6 projects focused on issues related to indoor air quality. Measuring campaigns in several European cities were carried out by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to monitor indoor/outdoor and personal exposure concentrations of selected substances. Lastly, the SCENIHR adopted an opinion on "Possible effects of Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) on Human Health" in March 2007 followed by possible projects under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

Progress on food policies: the Action Plan also envisaged improvements in the following areas:

- **water**: a Water Information System for Europe (WISE) has been further developed by the Commission and should enable further integration of drinking water data. A Commission proposal for revising the Drinking Water Directive is foreseen for the end of 2008;
- **air**: in 2004, the last of the air quality 'daughter' directives was adopted, setting target values for arsenic, nickel, cadmium and benzo(a)pyrene in ambient air. The Commission adopted in 2005 the Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution and the proposal for the Directive on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe. The Commission proposal for new heavy duty vehicle emission standard EURO VI is scheduled for 2007;
- **chemicals**: further to the Mercury Strategy, a number of proposals have been adopted by the Commission since then with a view to banning mercury for certain uses within the EU. At the same time, the SCHER is working on a request for an opinion on the environmental risks and indirect health effects of mercury in dental amalgam;
- **plant protection products**: the Commission adopted a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides and a proposal for a Framework Directive, which will impose appropriate training for professional users, restrict the use of pesticides in certain areas and start the development of relevant indicators. Regarding chemicals, an important step was reached with the final adoption of the REACH Regulation in December 2006, which will enter into force in June 2007 and impose gathering information on toxicological properties of chemicals;
- **environmental and industrial contaminants in food**: maximum levels are set in EU legislation and sampling and analysis provisions are set out for monitoring compliance with these in order to ensure consumer safety;
- **noise**: the Commission effectively contributed to the WHO Night Time Noise Guidelines project over the last 3 years, from which the results will be used in the framework of Commission activities in 2007 to review the health effects of noise.

Next steps: in the next 3 years, the Commission, in close cooperation with Member States, will continue to implement the various actions foreseen in the Action Plan. To this end, the Commission will maintain its focus on the integration of environment and health concerns into other policies as well as on the integration of the many actors involved. In order to strengthen EU capacity for policymaking in this area, the Commission will gradually step up its effort to exploit the outcomes of research projects and other information gathering efforts and their **translation into policy**.

In 2010, the Commission will identify the elements to be addressed in the next cycle.

Mid-term review of the European environment and health action plan 2004 - 2010

2007/2252(INI) - 04/09/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 522 votes to 16, with 7 abstentions, a resolution on the mid-term review of the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Frédérique **RIES** (EPP-ED, BE) on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

The resolution acknowledges the efforts made by the Commission since the action plan was launched in 2004, even though the Parliament considers that such an action plan is bound to **fail at least in part**, since it is designed solely to accompany existing Community policies, it is not based upon a preventive policy intended to reduce illnesses linked to environmental factors, and it pursues no clear, quantified objective.

The Parliament regrets the fact that the Commission has not provided sufficient funding for human biological monitoring in 2008, as it had promised the Parliament and the Member States. The Parliament therefore calls on the Commission to respond by 2010 to two essential objectives:

1. make members of the general public aware of environmental pollution and the impact thereof on their health;
2. adapt European risk-reduction policy.

The Parliament recommends that the Member States meet their obligations as regards implementation of Community legislation and that the Commission does not weaken those laws under pressure from lobbies or regional or international organisations.

Vulnerable groups: the Parliament stresses that, when it comes to assessing the impact of environmental factors on health, consideration should be given first and foremost to vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, newborn babies, children and the elderly. Those who are the most susceptible to pollutants should be protected by specific measures to reduce exposure to indoor environmental contaminants in healthcare facilities and schools.

A new dynamic approach to protection based on the precautionary principle: the Parliament claims that the EU needs to apply a continuous dynamic and flexible approach to the Action Plan and that it should acquire specific expertise on the subject of environmental health, to be based on transparency and on a multidisciplinary and adversarial approach which would thus enable the general public's distrust of official agencies and committees of experts to be countered. Although there have been genuine advances in environmental policy in recent years in the form of a reduction in air pollution, an improvement in water quality, the collection and recycling of waste, the monitoring of chemicals etc., the Parliament states that EU **policy still lacks a comprehensive preventive strategy and fails to apply the precautionary principle**. The Commission should revise the criteria as regards recourse to the precautionary principle pursuant to European Court of Justice case-law, in order to ensure that an action and security principle based on the adoption of provisional and proportionate measures lies at the heart of Community health and environment policies.

Air quality: once again, the Parliament calls on the Commission to come forward as soon as possible with concrete measures on indoor air quality. The Commission is called upon to draft appropriate minimum requirements to guarantee the quality of indoor air in buildings to be newly built. The Parliament recommends that, in awarding individual European Union support, the Commission bear in mind its impact on the quality of indoor air, exposure to electromagnetic radiation and the health of particularly vulnerable sections of the population. It also calls for environmental quality standards for priority substances in water to be laid down. The Parliament points out that certain Member States have successfully introduced mobile analysis laboratories (or ‘green ambulances’) to enable habitat pollution in public and private places to be diagnosed swiftly and reliably. It considers therefore that the Commission should promote such a practice within the Member States which have not yet acquired such a means of direct intervention at a polluted site.

Dangers of new technologies: the Parliament is concerned about the lack of specific legal provisions to ensure the safety of consumer products containing nanoparticles being put on the market. It is greatly concerned at the Bio-Initiative international report on electromagnetic fields, which highlights the health risks posed by emissions from mobile-telephony devices such as mobile telephones, UMTS, Wifi, Wimax and Bluetooth, and also DECT landline telephones. It notes, in this respect, that the limits on exposure to electromagnetic fields which have been set for the general public are **obsolete**. They do not take account of developments in information and communication technologies or vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, newborn babies and children. The plenary therefore calls on the Council to **amend its Recommendation 1999/519/EC** in order to take into account the Member States' best practices and thus to set stricter exposure limits for all equipment which emits electromagnetic waves in the frequencies between 0.1 MHz and 300 GHz.

Global warming: worried about the multiple health risks created by global warming on EU territory, the Parliament calls for enhanced cooperation between the WHO, the Member States’ monitoring authorities, the Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in order to bolster the early-warning system and thus to curb the harmful effects which climate change has on health. The Parliament stresses that this Action Plan would benefit from being extended to cover negative impacts of climate change on human health. The plenary therefore calls on the Member States and the Commission to respond adequately to the new threats posed by climate change such as the increased presence of emerging viruses and undetected pathogens and therefore implement new existing pathogen reduction technologies that reduce known and undetected viruses and other pathogens transmitted by blood.

At the same time, the Parliament regrets that the current cost benefit impact assessment of the '20 20 by 2020 Europe’s Climate Change Opportunity' (COM(2008)0030) only considers the health benefits of reduced air pollution at a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. It calls on the Commission to ensure that the (ancillary) co-benefits to health of various levels of ambition, in line with the International Panel on Climate Change recommendations of domestic 25% to 40% as well as possibly 50% or more of greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2020, are urgently investigated and modelled into an impact assessment.

Mental health: the Parliament calls on the Commission to pay attention to the serious problem of mental health, considering the number of suicides in the EU, and to devote more resources to the development of adequate prevention strategies and therapies.

To conclude, the Parliament urges the Commission and Member States to acknowledge the advantages of the prevention and precautionary principles and to develop and implement tools enabling potential environmental and health threats to be anticipated and countered. It recommends that the Commission **cost the 'second cycle' of this action plan** and make provision for appropriate funding covering a larger number of practical measures to reduce environmental impact on health and to implement prevention and precautionary measures. Lastly, it urges the Council to take a decision without delay on the proposal for a regulation establishing the Union Solidarity Fund.