

Mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report by Riitta **MYLLER** (PSE, FI) on the mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme.

The parliamentary committee considers it regrettable that the mid-term review of the Sixth Environment Action Programme has been delayed by almost one year and regrets the fact that, on the whole, the European Union is not on schedule with the implementation of the measures planned in the Action Programme. It also notes that **Thematic Strategies** – whilst they have created additional opportunities for stakeholder involvement and a more strategic approach to EU legislative policy – have also lengthened the duration of the environmental policy-making process by delaying the formulation of concrete policy proposals and adoption of resulting measures.

MEPs believe that it is essential to **strengthen the position of the Sixth Environment Action Programme** as the environmental dimension of the EU's sustainable development strategy. They also call upon the Commission to treat the **protection of human health** as an issue of leading importance amongst the other environmental protection priorities.

The report recalls that the **full and correct implementation of the existing legislation** is a priority and stresses that binding legislation remains central to meeting environmental challenges. MEPs call on the Commission to strengthen its activities as guardian of the Treaty, and recommend the adoption of specific support measures in favour of regions confronted with difficulties linked to the implementation of this aspect of the *acquis communautaire*.

In addition, the report requests that EU environment policies be designed and reassessed, focusing more so on the objectives to achieve rather than the means to do so, thus leaving Member States and farmers free to determine the most efficient and effective means to achieve the stated objectives.

MEPs urge the Commission and the Member States to **promote stronger and more coherent environmental policy integration** in all EU policy-making and request that all aspects linked to the protection of the environment and health be detailed in all policies. In particular, the report highlights:

- the need to elaborate **binding sectoral targets and timetables** in order to achieve concrete results towards the integration of environmental considerations in other economic sectors;
- the **responsibility of economic stakeholders** of certain sectors of activity in order to obtain results in the long term, in the area of energy and climate;
- the importance of a **regional dimension**, which should be taken into account at the implementation of the Sixth Environment Action Programme, particularly for actions relating to climate change and mitigating its effects;
- the need to take the **Natura 2000** programme in regional development programmes into account, so as to combine the principle of protection of European biodiversity with the development and improved quality of life of the population;
- the need for a wider use of **market-based instruments**, taking the environmental impact of all production and distribution processes and consumption patterns into consideration;
- the importance of planning *a posteriori* **criminal sanctions**, especially in cases of illegal dumping of dangerous waste on territory belonging to other Member States.

The Commission and Member States are, amongst others, called upon to:

- devote more effort to **ecological tax** reform, including a gradual shift of the tax burden from welfare-negative taxes (e.g. on labour) towards welfare-positive taxes, (e.g. on environmentally damaging activities, such as resource use or pollution);
- benefit from bilateral and regional **trade negotiations** to move towards trade commitments which have direct positive effects on the environment, such as the promotion of trade of sustainable goods and services, as well as the commitment to effectively implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs);
- assist **developing countries** to deploy sustainable and efficient technologies by implementing mechanisms, such as strengthening technological capacities and transfers, and by providing them with financial and institutional support;
- continue, in the framework of the **Doha Round**, to seek a 0% tariff agreement for import duties on environmental goods and services, and strive to reach consensus on their definition, which must include the durability of their production methods;
- promote a more pragmatic and transverse use of **innovation and new technologies** in all EU policies;
- adopt genuinely green **public procurement** rules to promote innovation and sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- increase efforts to achieve the objective of 20% in terms of **renewable energy sources** and of 10% regarding the use of biofuels.

MEPs call on the European Union to promote **climate diplomacy** in its trade relations with countries which are not linked by multilateral agreements on environmental protection, like the USA, China and India for example, who for various reasons do not apply the Kyoto Protocol. They recommend the introduction of a durability clause in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), establishing environment policy principles, such as the principle of precaution and the ‘polluter pays’ principle.

Finally, the report highlights the importance of **raising consumer awareness** so that they better understand the consequences of their behaviour. Considering that proper information to citizens should be deemed a priority, MEPs support the development of a clear and comprehensive labelling system.