

Mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme

2007/2204(INI) - 10/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 599 votes to 19 with 19 abstentions, a resolution on the mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme. The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Riitta **MYLLER** (PSE, FI) on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

Parliament considers it regrettable that the mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme (Sixth EAP) has been delayed by almost a year. It deplores the fact that, on the whole, the EU is not on schedule with the implementation of the measures planned in the Action Programme, contrary to what the Commission claims in its own mid-term review. The EU must do everything in its power to attain the objectives agreed in the Sixth EAP, as failure to attain them would damage the EU's credibility. Parliament notes that, whilst the use of **thematic strategies** has created additional opportunities for stakeholder involvement, they have also lengthened the duration of the environmental policy-making process by delaying the formulation of concrete policy proposals.

Members believe that, within the EU, competences must be clearly allocated and defined. They point out that **the Commission's mid-term review** shows confusion and internal ambiguity with regard to the competences of the Commission and of the Member States. Both the limits of respective competences and specific responsibilities must be clearly established and set down in order to ensure that those responsibilities continue to be met. It is essential to strengthen the position of the Sixth Environment Action Programme as the environmental dimension of the EU's sustainable development strategy.

Parliament 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 call on the EU budgetary authority to provide the Commission with all the necessary financial and human resources to ensure that the most efficient monitoring of the implementation and enforcement of existing legislation is carried out in all Member States.

In addition, Parliament calls for EU environmental policies to be designed, and reviewed, so as to focus more on goal prescriptions rather than means descriptions, leaving Member States and farmers free to find the most effective and efficient means for reaching the desired goals. The Commission and the Member States are urged to promote stronger and more coherent environmental policy integration in all EU policy-making. Parliament calls for integration of environmental protection and health protection aspects into all policies, regretting both the lack of integration of these aspects in various environmental legal frameworks and the preparations for new legislation and the lack of their integration into legislation which has primary objectives other than environmental protection. Parliament highlights the following:

-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 need to take the Natura 2000 programme in regional development programmes into account, so as to reconcile the principle of protection of European biodiversity with the development and improved quality of life of the population.

Parliament is concerned by the findings of various independent studies that **the Commission guidelines on impact assessments** are not fully respected by Commission DGs, that the assessment and quantification of economic impacts has been emphasised at the expense of environmental, social and international impacts, that the costs of legislation are assessed far more than the benefits, and that short-term considerations overshadow the long-term. It calls on the Commission to take action to rectify these persistent deficiencies.

The Commission and Member States are 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 environmental benefits;

- assist developing countries in the deployment of sustainable and efficient technologies through all mechanisms available;

-adopt genuinely **green public procurement rules** to promote innovation and sustainable consumption and production patterns;

-intensify efforts to achieve the 20% target for renewables and the 10% target for biofuel consumption keeping in mind that **energy crops** must not jeopardise food supplies. The sustainability mechanism, which is at the development stage, should apply the most stringent sustainability criteria to biofuels.

MEPs call on the EU 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, who for various reasons are not implementing the Kyoto Protocol.

Lastly, Parliament highlights the importance of raising consumer awareness and supports the development of a clear and comprehensive labelling system.