








Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2060(INI)	Procedure completed
Thematic strategy on air pollution		
Subject 3.70.02 Atmospheric pollution, motor vehicle pollution		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur
	 Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		Appointed 29/11/2005
			PSE CORBEY Dorette
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion
	 Industry, Research and Energy		Appointed The committee decided not to give an opinion.
European Commission	 Transport and Tourism		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	 Regional Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	 Agriculture and Rural Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	Commission DG		Commissioner
	Environment		DIMAS Stavros

Key events			
21/09/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0446	Summary
16/03/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
21/06/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
30/06/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0235/2006	
25/09/2006	Debate in Parliament		
26/09/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/09/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0366/2006	Summary
26/09/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2060(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33972

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2005)0446	21/09/2005	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		SEC(2005)1133	21/09/2005	EC	
Committee draft report		PE370.247	03/04/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE374.012	08/05/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0235/2006	30/06/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0366/2006	26/09/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)4772	19/10/2006	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)5076-2	13/12/2006	EC	

Thematic strategy on air pollution

PURPOSE : to propose a thematic strategy on air pollution.

CONTENT : given the trans-boundary nature of air pollution there has been a long held recognition in the EU to regulate and contain the spread of this problem. To date, EU action has focused on establishing minimum quality standards for ambient air, tackling the problems of acid rain as well as seeking to reduce ground level ozone. As a result polluting emissions from large combustion plants and mobile sources have been reduced, fuel quality has improved and environmental protection requirements integrated into the transport and energy sectors. However, and in spite of significant improvements, serious air pollution persists. The 6th Environmental Action Plan has therefore set an ambitious target under the thematic strategy on air pollution whereby the EU is to attain levels of air quality that do not give rise to negative impacts or risk human health and the environment. In response to this objective the Commission opened a consultation exercise, entitled CAFE, in which it examined whether current legislation is sufficient to achieve the set objectives by 2020. Of the 11 578 responses received over 10 000 were from private individuals ? a sign of how seriously many EU citizens consider the problem of air pollution to be. The results of the consultation exercise showed that significant negative impacts will persist even with the effective implementation of current legislation. In response to this concern the Commission has prepared this ?Thematic Strategy on air pollution?.

Findings from the impact assessment indicate that it is impossible to apply all of the technical measures. For example, even if all technical measures were to be applied irrespective of cost, it would still not be possible to meet the ambitious 6th EAP objectives. The Commission has been forced to make a policy choice on the level of health and environmental protection. The strategy chosen sets health and environmental objectives and emission reduction targets for the main pollutants. These objectives are to be delivered in stages. By setting objectives to be attained by 2020, EU citizens will be protected from exposure to particulate matter and ozone in air and European ecosystems will be better protected from acid rain, excess nutrient nitrogen and ozone. This implies that the concentration of PM25 would be reduced by 75% and ground level ozone by 60% from what is technically feasible by 2020. In addition the threat to the natural environment from both acidification and eutrophication will be reduced by 55% from what is technically possible.

Part of the strategy will be implemented through a revision of the current ambient air quality legislation comprising two main elements. The first, a streamlining of existing provisions and the merging of five legal instruments into a single directive. The second, the introduction of new air quality standards for fine particulate matter (PM25) in the air. In addition, the national emission ceilings Directive will be revised to ensure reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, volatile organic compounds, ammonia and primary particulate matter.

The Commission pledges that its next steps will be to review the strategy in 2010, which in turn will feed into the final evaluation of the 6th EAP. In its conclusions to the Strategy, the Commission notes that air pollution continues to diminish the health, quality and life of EU citizens as well as the EU's environment. The magnitude of these effects is too large to ignore and doing nothing more beyond implementing existing legislation is not a sensible option. The proposed Strategy, on the other hand, sets out a long term perspective for cleaner air in Europe.

Thematic strategy on air pollution

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Dorette CORBEY (PES, NL) in response to the Commission's paper on the thematic strategy for air pollution. MEPs pointed out that air pollution can be effectively combated only by means of a coordinated package of

measures - at European, national and local level - which is primarily geared to combating emissions of pollutants at source. They added that effective - and consistent - implementation of existing legislation was crucial for achieving improvements in air quality in 2020, and that many Member States did not meet the limit values under current legislation.

The report regretted that the strategy did not include any legal requirement to reduce particulate emissions but merely confined itself to suggesting indicative targets. It wanted to see more ambitious targets for reducing concentration levels of nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and fine particles (PM_{2.5}). The committee called for the introduction of a PM_{2.5} target value of 20 µg/m³ in 2010, turning into a limit value in 2015, and a long-term target value for PM_{2.5} of 10 µg/m³ as recommended by the WHO. While supporting the Commission's proposed target exposure reduction of 20% for PM_{2.5} in 2020, MEPs also wanted to see differentiated reduction targets which take account of the different initial levels of the Member States and the measures taken previously. The report added that there should be greater uniformity of the methods of measurement and calculation used by different Member States for fine particulate concentrations.

MEPs also wanted to see more focus on the sources of pollution, including agriculture, shipping, industry and transport systems. The Commission was urged to put forward a proposal for revision of the National Emission Ceilings Directive as soon as possible to make it "commensurate with the level of ambition advocated by Parliament". Lastly, the report called for the Commission to carry out a review in 2012 of the progress made in attaining the objectives of the strategy and to assess the potential in different sectors for further cost-effective reductions.

Thematic strategy on air pollution

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Dorette Corbey (PES, NL). The resolution was adopted by 563 votes in favour to 19 against with 42 abstentions. It pointed out that air pollution was a major cause of death and factor for disease in Europe. Many Member States do not meet the limit values under current air quality legislation - most problems occur in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, northern Italy, Poland and in large cities. Current measures directed at the sources of pollution are insufficient to achieve the limit values.

Setting the right ambition level to tackle air pollution: whilst Parliament welcomed the Commission's Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution, it noted with concern that the Strategy does not show how the objectives of the 6th EAP could be attained and does not include any legal requirement to reduce particulate emissions, but simply confines itself to suggesting indicative targets. It called for a strategy with more ambitious reduction targets that correspond to scenario C for VOC (volatile organic compounds), PM_{2.5} and NO_x since this would lead to greater health benefits and employment benefits, while maintaining a balanced approach between costs and benefits. The resolution outlines the precise reductions recommended.

Parliament favours the introduction of a PM₁₀ yearly limit value of 33 µg/m³ in 2010 and supports the Commission's proposal to introduce a concentration reduction of PM_{2.5}, as the PM_{2.5} part within PM₁₀ is the most harmful to health. It calls for the introduction of a PM_{2.5} target value of 20 µg/m³ in 2010, turning into a limit value in 2015, and a long-term target value for PM_{2.5} of 10 µg/m³. Member States that can show that they have taken all feasible measures should be granted more time to reach the limit and target values. Parliament also advocates greater uniformity of the methods of measurement and calculation used by different Member States for fine particulate concentrations. Inter alia, the correction factors should be applied properly. The Commission's proposal to introduce a target exposure reduction of 20% for PM_{2.5} in 2020 compared to the average exposure index of 2010 was approved. However, Parliament called for differentiated reduction targets, which take account of the different initial levels of the Member States and the measures taken previously, with particular reference to the greater reduction potential of Member States where the initial exposure level is high.

Sector-based measures: Parliament called upon the Commission and Member States to take the necessary measures as soon as possible to cut emissions in the various sectors that contribute to air pollution, in which connection particular priority should be assigned to those sectors which have not previously been regulated and where further emission reductions can be achieved at lower cost. It wanted to see a proposal for revision of the National Emission Ceilings Directive and asked for specified urgent measures to cut emissions from the shipping sector. Parliament also noted that, while agriculture is one of the major sources of air pollution caused by ammonia, there are few obligations on that sector to reduce emissions, and it made some suggestions on this. It also made recommendations on reduction of emissions from industrial sources, domestic sources, including standards on heating equipment, and transport systems.