

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
of 22 December 2003
on 2003 Environment Policy Review
(2004/C 8/04)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

- (1) RECALLING the interest, already expressed in its conclusions on 4 March 2002 and confirmed by the Spring European Council in March 2003, for an annual environment report, REITERATES the need to reflect the results of the EPR in the analysis presented in the Spring Report;
 - (2) TAKES NOTE of the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament '2003 Environment Policy Review' (EPR), in the light of the new political context of the EU environmental policy since the adoption of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) in 2001, and CONSIDERS that the EPR could become a key instrument for the monitoring and the evaluation of the implementation of the 6th Environment Action Programme (EAP) and should also contribute to the Spring European Council and the SDS review, i.a. by providing a good basis for the different Council formations in reviewing the implementation of sustainable development targets;
 - (3) CONSIDERS the EPR a first constructive attempt to outline a general picture of the EU environmental policy. In particular the Council LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming communications of the Commission on the WSSD follow-up, the Environment Technology Action Plan, the stocktaking of the national SDS and of the Cardiff process, including an analysis on how to relaunch this process, all of which are planned for the beginning of 2004, as well as the 2004 SDS Review;
 - (4) NOTES with great concern the indications of the EPR that negative trends since 2001, especially in areas such as climate change, energy and transport as well as biodiversity, have not been reversed, and that further EU and national measures are necessary in order to meet key EU sustainable development targets. To this end, the Council REAFFIRMS that the objectives set out in the 6th EAP should be taken into account in future financial perspective reviews of Community financial instruments;
 - (5) RECONFIRMS the need to strengthen the environmental dimension of the Lisbon process with a view to achieving economic, social and environmental renewal and NOTES that the contribution of the environment to the Lisbon goals merits further exploration; UNDERLINES therefore the need to ensure a timely and coordinated adoption of relevant communications by the Commission;
 - (6) UNDERLINES the need to further clarify, *inter alia* within the 2004 SDS Review, the interaction between the Lisbon strategy and the EU SDS and to actively implement the Cardiff process and the 6th EAP, with a view to better integrate the environmental protection requirements into the broader framework of the Community policies and promote the synergies between the respective pillars of sustainable development;
 - (7) CONSIDERS these conclusions to be the result of a preliminary assessment of the EPR and, taking into account the report's value and complexity, will endeavour to further examine its specific contents and to adopt more detailed conclusions as a contribution to the preparation of the 2004 Spring European Council.
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