

Friday 20 April 2012

**Review of the 6th Environment Action Programme and the setting of priorities for the 7th Environment Action Programme**

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**European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 on the review of the 6th Environment Action Programme and the setting of priorities for the 7th Environment Action Programme – A better environment for a better life (2011/2194(INI))**

(2013/C 258 E/16)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled 'The sixth Community Environment Action Programme – Final assessment' (COM(2011)0531),
- having regard to Articles 191 and 192 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, relating to preserving, protecting and improving the quality of human health and the environment,
- having regard to the Environment Council conclusions of 10 October 2011 on the Assessment of the sixth community environment action programme and the way forward: Towards a 7th EU environment action programme,
- having regard to the EEA report 'The European Environment – State and Outlook 2010' (SOER2010),
- having regard to EEA Technical report No 15/2011 'Revealing the costs of air pollution from industrial facilities in Europe'
- having regard to the communication from the Commission 'Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission 'Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020' (COM(2011)0244),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission 'A Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050' (COM(2011)0112),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission 'Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe' (COM(2011)0571),
- having regard to the Commission White Paper 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' (COM(2011)0144),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for the next multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 (COM(2011)0398),
- having regard to the Commission proposals on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and of the Cohesion Policy,
- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinions of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the Committee on Regional Development (A7-0048/2012),

A. whereas the current 6th EAP will expire on 22 July 2012;

Friday 20 April 2012

- B. whereas for a decade the 6th EAP has provided an overarching framework for environment policy, during which time environmental legislation has been consolidated and substantially completed, and whereas its adoption by codecision has increased its legitimacy and has helped create a sense of ownership; whereas, however, Member States and the Commission have not always acted in accordance with this programme, and whereas it had some shortcomings which have to be addressed;
  - C. whereas progress towards the objectives set out in the 6th EAP has been variable, with some objectives having been achieved (climate change, waste) and others not having been achieved (air, urban environment, natural resources), while the attainment of others depends on future implementation efforts (chemicals, pesticides, water), and whereas a number of challenges remain and additional efforts are required;
  - D. whereas the 6th EAP has been compromised by a lack of implementation of the environmental acquis in the areas of air pollution control, water and waste water treatment, waste and nature conservation;
  - E. whereas the goal of halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010 has not been reached due to a lack of political and financial commitments;
  - F. whereas 'The European Environment – State and Outlook 2010' (SOER 2010) points out that major environmental challenges remain which will have significant consequences if left unaddressed;
  - G. whereas certain aspects of environmental legislation should be reviewed, in particular by strengthening the independence of environmental impact assessments in the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive;
  - H. whereas environmental degradation – air pollution, noise, chemicals, poor water quality and ecosystem degradation – is an important factor in the rise of chronic diseases; whereas an ambitious EU environmental protection agenda is therefore a key component for effective prevention of disease and ill-health;
  - I. whereas major differences remain between Member States as regards environmental quality and public health;
1. Underlines the urgency of adopting as soon as possible a 7th EAP, in order to address the environmental challenges lying ahead; calls therefore on the Commission to present a proposal for a 7th EAP without delay;
  2. Considers that the new 7th EAP needs to describe in an unambivalent manner the environmental challenges the EU is faced with, including accelerating climate change, deterioration of our ecosystem and increasing overuse of natural resources;
  3. Emphasises, in light of the current sustainability challenges that face the EU, that the Environmental Action Programmes, as overarching instruments, contribute to ensuring the necessary coordination among the various Community policies; considers, specifically, that in the coming decade, it will be even more crucial to address environmental issues with a more coherent and integrated approach that takes into account the links between them and that fills the remaining gaps, as otherwise irreversible damage may be caused;
  4. Considers that the 7th EAP should provide a positive narrative on the benefits of stringent environmental policy to strengthen public support and political will to act;
  5. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should set concrete targets for 2020 as well as setting out a clear ambitious vision for the environment in 2050 aimed at providing a high quality of life and well-being for all within safe environmental limits;

Friday 20 April 2012

6. Considers that the timeline for the 7th EAP should be aligned with the post-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Europe 2020 strategy; stresses, however, that key decisions in other policy areas with a strong impact on the environment are likely to be taken before the adoption of the 7th EAP.

7. Stresses that the 7th EAP should provide the right framework to ensure adequate funding, including for innovation, research and development and that financing environmental objectives, in synergy with LIFE, and fully integrating protection of the environment should be an important part of the next Multiannual Financial Framework, of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), of the Cohesion Policy and of Horizon 2020; considers, in particular, that the EU should allow new sources of financing to be created for the EAP, for instance through the mobilisation of market instruments and payments for ecosystem services;

8. Considers that the 7th EAP should be an overarching framework that makes it possible to deal with both persistent and emerging environmental and sustainability challenges, with due regard for existing and planned measures;

9. Considers that, for the coming decade, the 7th EAP should ensure that the EU's environmental choices are sufficiently clear and predictable for national and local administrations, citizens, businesses and investors; is of the opinion that this overarching EU programme should send a strong political signal to the rest of the world and contribute to establishing international environmental governance;

10. Invites the Commission to base its future proposal for the 7th EAP on the following 3 'i's priorities:

— Implementation and strengthening

— Integration

— International dimension;

11. Believes that many of the goals contained in the 6th Environment Action Programme are well formulated, but is also aware that many are far from having been met; would therefore like to see more of these objectives being transferred to the 7th Environment Action Programme;

12. Wishes to emphasise the importance of allowing the precautionary principle to govern the EU's environment policy;

### ***Implementation and strengthening***

13. Notes with concern that implementation of the environmental acquis is still insufficient; considers that full implementation and enforcement at all levels, and further strengthening, of key environmental and related policy priorities – climate change, biodiversity, resources, environment and health, as well as social and employment policies, energy, sustainable transport, sustainable agriculture and rural development – are crucial; emphasises, therefore, the need for clear, consistent environmental legislation, based on public policy evaluations and feedback;

14. Highlights the fact that full compliance with EU environmental law is a genuine Treaty obligation and a criterion for the use of EU funds in Member States;

15. Underscores the fundamental importance of informing citizens about our environmental policies in order to involve them in the success of such policies; requests, therefore, that a greater effort in this respect be made in the future Action Programme, bearing in mind that a better environment for a better life cannot be created unilaterally from within the Institutions without the support of society itself;

Friday 20 April 2012

***Climate change***

16. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should ensure full implementation of the climate and energy package and provide for a strengthening of it;

17. Considers that the 7th EAP should reflect the need for binding targets for energy efficiency and/or energy savings as this will contribute to combating climate change and to environmental protection; stresses the importance of a flexible Community framework, in order to ensure that the proposed energy efficiency measures take due account of the specificities in each Member State;

18. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should also take the debate beyond 2020 and consider mid-term targets for emissions reductions, energy efficiency and renewables for 2030;

19. Considers that the 7th EAP should also address maritime and non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions;

20. Considers that adaptation to climate change should be properly addressed by the 7th EAP, taking into account the different necessities of the regions, on the basis of the upcoming EU Adaptation Strategy; invites the Commission to put forward an ambitious proposal for reforming EU plant health legislation in order to effectively combat the proliferation of invasive species and pests, some of which are the result of climate change;

21. Acknowledges the additional benefits of a growing renewable energy production in terms of pollution reduction and health impacts, provided that it effectively reduces non-renewable energy production;

22. Recommends increasing support for regional low-carbon, climate-resilient strategies and small-scale climate projects by SMEs, NGOs and local authorities under the Climate Action sub-programme included in the new LIFE programme proposed by the Commission;

***Efficient and Sustainable Use of Resources***

23. Recalls that an absolute reduction of resource use is urgently needed; asks the Commission to interpret the term 'resource efficiency' broadly so that all resources are covered; points out that these include, for example, natural energy and non-energy resources, such as water, ecosystems and biological diversity; asks the Commission also to integrate sustainable materials management and sustainability in production and consumption into the area of resource efficiency;

24. Considers that the 7th EAP should be instrumental in achieving a long-term target, namely reducing the Ecological Footprint by 50 % within the next 20 years; points out that the EU's excessive ecological footprint is undermining regional and global prospects for natural ecosystems that can sufficiently support humankind;

25. Considers that the objectives of the Roadmap towards a resource-efficient Europe should be fully included in the 7th EAP;

26. Invites the Commission to already use – and improve – existing resource efficiency indicators where available and set targets without any delay in close cooperation with the Member States and all other interested parties, and to develop as soon as possible new indicators and targets where needed, as requested in the Roadmap; calls on the Commission, in view of the limitations of the flagship indicator on resource productivity, to define an indicator for material consumption, using a lifecycle-based approach that integrates hidden flows, i.e. the potential for environmental pressures to be transferred outside the EU, and movements of shortfalls and dependencies, without delay;

Friday 20 April 2012

27. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should provide for the development of a legislative framework for mainstreaming into relevant policies, especially that of sustainable production, the notion of cascading use of resources, ensuring that our scarce raw materials are used to their full potential;

28. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should include objectives on how to deal with the urban environment, where the majority of European citizens live, where more than two thirds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are produced, and which has a considerable impact on the environment, and that it should provide guidance on how to promote integrated environmental planning, sustainable mobility, quality of life and human health in cities, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity;

29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, with a view to implementing pollution reduction strategies in the urban environment, to examine the possibility of creating a European support framework for the progressive implementation of urban mobility plans in European cities, establishing procedures and financial support mechanisms at European level for preparing urban mobility audits as well as urban mobility plans, and setting up a European Urban Mobility Scoreboard;

30. Considers that the 7th EAP should provide for full attainment of the goals for sustainable and ecological consumption and production set out in the Roadmap, for example as regards Green and Sustainable Public Procurement in compliance with the principles of transparency and fair competition; calls for the development of product policy, addressing the whole product lifecycle and including animal welfare friendly methods of production; calls on the Commission, once the harmonised European method for calculating a product's environmental footprint has been finalised, to ensure that additional information for consumers about the environmental impact of products, beyond existing schemes (eco-label, energy label, organic certification, etc.), is included; calls on the Commission to extend the scope of the Ecodesign Directive and review the implementation thereof;

31. Considers that the 7th EAP should encourage the creation of incentive schemes to promote demand for recycled materials, particularly when incorporated in finished products;

32. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should provide for full implementation of waste legislation, including compliance with the waste treatment hierarchy while ensuring coherence with other EU policies; considers that it should set more ambitious prevention, re-use and recycling targets, including a net decrease in waste generation, no incineration of waste that is suitable for recycling or composting with respect to the hierarchy of the Waste Framework Directive, and a strict ban on the dumping of selectively collected waste in landfill, as well as sectoral objectives for resource efficiency and process efficiency benchmarks; recalls that waste is also a resource and can often also be reutilised, in which case we can ensure the efficient use of resources; invites the Commission to investigate how to make collecting waste from consumer products more efficient both by extending the principle of extended producer responsibility and through guidelines on managing recovery, collection and recycling systems; emphasises the need to invest in the recycling of raw materials and rare earths, since mining, refining and recycling rare earths can have serious consequences for the environment unless managed appropriately;

33. Believes that targets that have already been set in several directives regarding the collection and separation of waste should be further elaborated and set for the highest and most qualitative recovery of materials in each of the phases of recycling, namely collection, dismantling, pre-processing and recycling/refinery;

34. Considers that the 7th EAP should take into account the provisions of the forthcoming Blueprint on EU Water Policy and stresses the value of a better coordinated approach to water pricing; calls on the Commission, therefore, to facilitate access to solutions to water shortages, water recovery and developing alternative irrigation techniques and to encourage the optimisation of the successive uses of water extracted from the water cycle, including recycling water used for agricultural and industrial purposes where appropriate, and recovering the nutrients and energy contained in waste water;

Friday 20 April 2012

35. Calls on Member States to ensure the full and effective implementation of water legislation and takes the view that, to ensure compliance with the Water Framework Directive and the Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks, measures must be developed to recover the natural banks of rivers and reforest the adjacent areas;

36. Urges the Commission to involve all relevant stakeholders in the formulation of targets which should ensure sustainability of land use in the 7th EAP; calls on the Commission to define critical land-use issues such as the loss of semi-natural habitats and the displacement of high-value land uses by bioenergy crops; emphasises, in this connection, the need for sustainability criteria for biomass and biofuels which also address the issue of indirect land-use change;

37. Considers that the 7th EAP needs to address the impacts of European policies outside the EU, and asks the Commission, therefore, to take forward the issue of reducing the EU's land footprint in third countries, in particular by addressing indirect land use change due to biofuels and biomass for energy, and to include the objective that no land of high environmental value will be converted to new uses in order to produce crops for the EU;

#### ***Biodiversity and Forestry***

38. Underlines the importance of acting now, in order to set the EU on the right track to fully meet its own biodiversity 2020 headline target, as well as its global commitments on protecting biodiversity, as we cannot afford to fail again, and of planning sufficient resources for the conservation of the Natura 2000 Network; considers that the difficulties encountered in meeting the target set for 2010 indicate the need for an in-depth review of the methods applied to date; believes that integrated strategic studies, including studies of the elements that could influence protected areas, must be carried out; considers that these studies should be incorporated into urban planning and be accompanied by educational and information campaigns about the importance of local resources and their conservation;

39. Considers that the objectives of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, including its targets and actions, should be fully included in the 7th EAP as a means to ensure its full implementation; considers that certain actions need to be reinforced in the short term so that biodiversity is more clearly addressed in all policy areas, and that additional actions are necessary (e.g. action to restore degraded eco-systems) to effectively achieve the 2020 target; stresses that the 7th EAP will provide a powerful framework to support the adoption of the necessary legal and financial instruments, starting with guaranteed funding for Natura 2000;

40. Emphasises the importance of mobilising both EU and national financial support from all possible sources, as well as developing innovative financial mechanisms, to ensure an adequate level of support for biodiversity;

41. Invites the Commission to publish a communication on the new European Forestry Strategy by the end of 2012, to propose effective measures to improve cooperation between Member States on forestry issues and to encourage a rational use of forestry resources and sustainable forest management;

42. Recommends including a stronger focus on forests in the new Common Agricultural Policy by promoting agroforestry and a rural development policy based on sustainable landscapes;

43. Calls for the introduction of a new Community regulation on preventing fires or, at the very least, proposes to strengthen cooperation between Member States in this area;

Friday 20 April 2012

**Environmental quality and health**

44. Takes the view, given that poor environmental conditions have a substantial impact on health, involving high costs, that the 7th EAP should notably:

- continue to include the 6th EAP's objective that by 2020 chemicals will only be produced and used in ways that do not have a significant negative impact on health and the environment;
- address air quality – including indoor air quality – and its impact on health;
- address noise and its impact on health;
- provide for the development of specific measures relating to emerging human and animal health threats, currently not sufficiently addressed, to examine the effects of new developments on human and animal health, such as nanomaterials, endocrine disruptors and the combination effects of chemicals, on the basis of scientific studies and commonly accepted definitions, where available;
- include action to protect children's health from environmental pollution, on the basis of the WHO Europe Parma Declaration on Environment and Health, of March 2010;
- tie in with the second Environmental Health Action Plan;

45. Underlines that the 7th EAP should set specific goals to ensure that by 2020 the health of European citizens is no longer undermined by pollution and hazardous substances;

46. Considers that full regard should be paid to the methods used for the risk assessment of chemicals, prioritising alternatives to animal tests; considers also that the 7th EAP should provide for the adoption of an EU-wide strategy to reduce the number of animals used in safety testing, while guaranteeing a high quality of life for humans and animals in the EU;

47. Believes that there is a need for a holistic approach to health and the environment, which focuses on precaution and the prevention of risks, and in particular takes account of vulnerable groups such as foetuses, children and young people;

48. Considers that efforts should be made to focus on prevention, precaution and promotion of environment-friendly activities at EU level, in the field of research, innovation and development, with the goal of reducing the environmental burden of disease;

49. Considers that the 7th EAP should address the transport issue by promoting more investment in environment-friendly transport systems and proposing solutions to tackle congestion, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and micro-particles;

50. Considers it important that the 7th Environment Action Programme pay special attention to the continued phasing out of mercury, both within and outside the EU;

**Enforcement**

51. Calls on the Member States to see to the full and proper implementation of EU environmental legislation and adopted policies and strategies, and to ensure adequate capacity and finances for full implementation, including in times of austerity, as non-implementation or incomplete implementation of EU environmental legislation is not only unlawful, but also far more costly to society in the long run;



Friday 20 April 2012

52. Considers it essential to strengthen the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) and urges the Commission to report on possible ways of doing so;

53. Calls on the Commission to systematically apply ex-ante controls of compliance with all relevant Community laws, particularly in the area of Cohesion Policy, before granting any funding;

54. Considers it important to view the 7th EAP as a means of communication with European citizens, so that it can mobilise these citizens, not least for the purposes of enforcing agreed policies on the ground;

55. Calls on the Commission to step up its role as the 'guardian of the Treaties' in order to ensure correct transposition, implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation by all Member States; recommends greater local authority participation throughout the process of defining environmental policy so as to improve implementation of the legislation across the board, including setting up teams to transpose environmental law at regional and local level; calls on the Commission, therefore, to explore what role the European Environment Agency could play in relation to transposition and implementation;

### ***Integration***

56. Takes the view that environmental considerations are gaining increasing importance in other sectoral policies and that, accordingly, environment policy should be further integrated into other policy areas;

57. Invites the Commission to develop indicators in order to be able to measure improvement of integration;

58. Takes the view that the objectives of Roadmap 2050 can only be achieved if complementary strategies are implemented, including assessment of agriculture, reforestation and the introduction of policy incentives for innovation and rapid implementation of solar, geothermal and marine energy;

59. Urges the Commission to include in its 7th EAP proposal an aggregated list of all the existing environment-related targets for the different policy areas, notably climate change, biodiversity, transport, energy, agriculture, fisheries and cohesion policy, and examine them in conjunction with each other, so as to allow for an appropriate comparison and to ensure that objectives are coherent;

60. Urges the Commission, when reviewing the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and Directive 2001/42/EC, to ensure that they contribute to a sustainable use of land as a critical resource in the EU and also to extend the scope of environmental impact assessments to cover not only large projects, while tightening and expanding the criteria of such assessments but also to include the notion of cascading use of resources and full life-cycle analysis;

61. Calls on the Commission to propose a procedure ensuring the impartiality and independence of environmental impact assessments, first of all by eliminating the direct relationship between project developers and the assessors;



Friday 20 April 2012

62. Recommends that an equitable balance be found between the need to combat climate change and to halt or mitigate biodiversity loss and the Seventh Environment Action Programme, so that the European Union can achieve the EU 2020 targets and avoid unnecessary costs resulting from climate change and biodiversity loss; stresses in this context the importance of cohesion policy post-2013; also emphasises, with prevention policy in mind, the need to see costs as investments for the future and for new jobs and to launch information, awareness and other campaigns so as to allow best practice to be exchanged at all levels; underlines the need for better use of technical assistance at national, regional and local levels in order to increase administrative capacity where needed; considers it necessary to efficiently match research and innovation objectives with local and regional development needs;

63. Takes the view that the objectives of Roadmap 2050 can only be achieved if complementary strategies are implemented, including assessment of agriculture, reforestation and the introduction of policy incentives for innovation and rapid implementation of solar, geothermal and marine energy;

64. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should include a strict and detailed plan both at European and national level for the phasing-out of all environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020, for example those affecting biodiversity, in order to respect the Nagoya commitments;

65. Considers that the 7th EAP should provide for the inclusion of environmental considerations beyond the current climate change and energy headline indicators in the European Semester; calls on the Commission, in particular, to integrate resource efficiency policies as set out in the Resource Efficiency Roadmap, and to monitor through the European Semester Member States' follow-up to country-specific recommendations accordingly;

66. Underlines the important role of regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, academia as well as civil society and the private sector, in the promotion and implementation of effective environment policy across the EU;

67. Considers that, in order to achieve meaningful results, implementation of the programmes at regional and local level must be ensured, and the process must be inclusive of all interested parties; calls for attention to be paid to the situation of regions and territories with special geographical features, such as islands, mountain regions and sparsely populated regions; welcomes the Commission's proposal to strengthen the use of Environmental Impact Assessments and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments in local and regional decision-making;

68. Underlines that the 7th EAP should provide for the full implementation of the Aarhus Convention, in particular regarding access to justice; stresses, in this connection, the urgent need to adopt the directive on access to justice; calls on the Council to respect its obligations resulting from the Aarhus Convention and to adopt a common position on the corresponding Commission proposal before the end of 2012;

69. Takes the view that the 7th EAP should aim at supporting the development of alternative models to measure growth and welfare 'beyond GDP';

70. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote the 'green economy' globally, integrating environmental, social and economic aspects such as poverty reduction;

Friday 20 April 2012

71. Underlines the importance of demonstrating to EU citizens, especially in the current economic climate, that environmental protection is not contradictory to sustainable economic and social development; advocates, to this end, the promotion of successful projects and the dissemination of information to the public on the feasibility of environmentally benign economic development in important natural and cultural heritage areas like the Natura 2000 network;

72. Recalls that the 7th EAP should provide for the right framework to ensure adequate funding, including funding for innovation, research and development;

73. Takes the view that the LIFE+ programme should be managed by the Commission, with the emphasis being placed on projects of innovation and excellence, promoting SMEs and R&D institutions and prioritising the maintenance of biodiversity with a systematic and integral approach and agricultural technologies compatible with the preservation of the soil and the food chain of animals' ecosystems; believes that the EU's LIFE+ programme should be more widely promoted in all regions of Europe in order to encourage innovative practices at local level and enhance the impact and awareness of the 'Environmental Policy and Management' section of this programme;

74. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop within the next Research Framework Programme a research and innovation programme targeting new materials and resources which could in the future replace existing raw materials that are in short supply;

#### ***International dimension***

75. Considers that the 7th EAP should have as a goal to integrate environmental considerations into all EU external relations, in particular into development aid and trade agreements, in order to promote environmental protection in third countries; urges the EU to promote joint programming of environmental research activities with its neighbours;

76. Invites the Commission to include in its proposal a goal for the EU to fully support the work on environmental accounting done by the UN, the World Bank and European Environment Agency, in order to equip the world with a harmonised environmental accounting system; welcomes the commitments made in the EU Biodiversity Strategy to improving knowledge of ecosystems and their services in the EU (as in the case of forests); encourages Member States to share information about their experiences and to compare notes on methodologies relating to ecosystem accounting;

77. Considers that the 7th EAP should provide for timely implementation of EU international commitments, in particular in the framework of the UNFCCC and the CBD;

78. Urges the Commission to integrate in the 7th EAP the outcome of the Rio+20 conference on the Green Economy and on strengthening International Environment Governance;

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79. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

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