

Stakeholder Consultation Document

Final Assessment of the 6th Community Environment Action Programme

Introduction

Since 1973, the European Commission has periodically issued Environment Action Programmes which announced forthcoming initiatives and legislative proposals as well as broader approaches and principles for EU environmental policy. In January 2001 the Commission adopted a Communication and a proposal for a decision on the 6th Environment Action Programme. On 22 July 2002 the European Parliament and the Council adopted the 6th EAP (Decision 1600/2002/EC)¹ according to the legislative Co-decision Procedure. The 6th EAP has indeed been the first Community environment action programme elaborated and adopted through the formal legislative co-decision procedure. It is therefore a formal act of the European Parliament and Council based on a Commission proposal (although legally not directly binding), embodying a commitment of all three institutions.

The 6EAP provides medium-term guidance for EU environmental policy over a 10-year period in both substantive and political process related terms. The Programme is also embedded in the broader framework of EU policy-making, as it constitutes the environmental pillar of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU-SDS), which, in turn, complemented and formed the overall framework for the EU's Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Priority areas and strategic approaches:

Besides the long-term aims and principles described in the introduction and in Article 2, the 6EAP sets out specific objectives in four priority areas:

- Tackling climate change
- Nature and biodiversity
- Environment and health and quality of life
- Sustainable use and management of natural resources and wastes

In addition to these priority areas, the 6EAP emphasises a number of horizontal and governance-related issues in Articles 3, 9 and 10 on “strategic approaches”, “international issues” and “environmental policy-making”. Examples of priorities in these areas include:

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/legis.htm>

- *Strategic approaches and environmental policy making*: adoption, and strengthening implementation and enforcement of Community environmental legislation (including on liability); dialogue and partnership with stakeholders and the public; environmental policy integration (including in the financial sector and research); ex-post and ex-ante policy evaluation and review; monitoring and indicator development; using a mix of instruments, including economic instruments and environmental information, to encourage sustainable production and consumption, sustainable use and management of land and seas.
- *International issues*: integration of environmental concerns into Community external policies; adoption of coherent development and environment targets; strengthening international environmental governance; mutual supportiveness between trade and environmental protection, including the precautionary principle; cross-border environmental co-operation with neighbouring countries and regions.

Thematic Strategies

Serving as an important link between the 6EAP's four priority areas and the Programme's horizontal and governance-related provisions, the 6th EAP envisaged the adoption of seven *thematic strategies* in the following areas: air pollution; marine environment; prevention and recycling of waste; sustainable use of resources; urban environment; soil; and pesticides. The thematic strategies aimed at considering the range of options and instruments required for dealing with a series of complex issues that require a broad and multi-dimensional approach, including the proposal of the necessary actions. The Commission adopted the thematic strategies as well as proposals for several pieces of associated Community legislation in 2005 and 2006.

Midterm Review

With a view to measuring progress in the implementation of the 6EAP, Article 11 of the Programme required the European Commission to submit to the European Parliament and Council a mid-term review "in the fourth year of operation of the Programme" and a final assessment "in the course of the final year of the Programme".

On the basis on an impact assessment and stakeholders and public consultations, the European Commission submitted the mid-term review in April 2007². It highlighted the link between growth, jobs and the environment (eco-industries, cost of inaction, eco-innovation) and concluded that that despite progress made, the EU was not yet on a path towards sustainable development because many environmental pressures were actually increasing. It concluded that the 6th EAP remained a valid framework for EU environment policy-making up to at least 2012 and that the Commission would focus for the remaining period on 4 perspectives for better policy-making:

- Improved implementation and enforcement;
- Enhanced international co-operation;
- Applying Better Regulation principles in environment policy-making;

² <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/review.htm>

- Promotion of policy integration

Objective of the consultation:

A Final Assessment of the 6th EAP is being prepared by the Commission with the aim to adopt it by mid 2011. To this end, in 2010 the Commission contracted an independent study to assess the achievements of the 6EAP, carried out by Ecologic Institute and partners. The final report of this study is now available³. In addition, the European Environment Agency launched its report "The European environment -- state and outlook 2010 (SOER 2010) at the European Parliament on 30 November 2010⁴.

These two reports comprise two key independent inputs to the Commission final assessment of the 6EAP. This stakeholder consultation provides the third key independent input to the final assessment.

Stakeholders have already been consulted in the course of the Ecologic report, via workshops and questionnaires. This one-day consultation provides an opportunity for stakeholders to express their views on the two recently-published independent reports as well as to provide any additional input that may be relevant to the final assessment of the 6EAP. Two presentations from Ecologic and the EEA will be followed by an open discussion, steered by a series of general and specific questions which are set out below.

The Commission will use the results of this consultation, together with the findings of the Ecologic report and the SOER, to prepare its final assessment of the Programme in the course of 2011.

General Questions

1. The four priority areas of the 6th Environment Action Programme (6thEAP) are climate change, environment and health, nature and biodiversity, natural resources and waste. What positive environmental impacts can be identified in each of these four priority areas over the last 9 years (2002-2010)?
2. In what ways has the 6thEAP contributed to the achievement of these positive environmental impacts? What in your view were the notable successes of the 6th EAP in that respect?
3. In which areas have there been less progress than expected in the 6thEAP and what are the likely reasons for this lack of progress?
4. In your view are there gaps in environment policy that are not addressed by the 6thEAP?
5. What lessons can be learned from the 6thEAP?

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/final.htm>

⁴ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/>

6. Taking into account the lessons learned from the 6thEAP what in your view are the emerging environmental policy challenges?

Specific Questions

7. The 6thEAP had a number of characteristics on which it would be useful to have your views:
 - i. Considering how the objectives and priority actions are formulated in the 6thEAP, do you consider them, including the 156 actions, to be too detailed or not detailed enough?
 - ii. Was the ten-year timeline of the 6thEAP appropriate? Was it the right balance between providing a degree of certainty for future policy development, the need to keep momentum in the programme and the time required for adoption of proposals, transposition into national legislation and implementation?
 - iii. Was the approach of developing thematic strategies before proposing legislative initiatives helpful or not?
 - iv. Are there any other characteristics of the 6thEAP which you regard as particularly helpful or unhelpful?
8. Did the 6thEAP contribute to improving implementation of EU environment legislation? Could that contribution have been made more effective? How (e.g. by the inclusion of additional implementation targets and indicators, etc) ?
9. Did the 6thEAP improve coherence within environmental policy and between environment policy and other policy areas? Was the 6thEAP able to boost integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas and, if so, how?
10. How far has the 6thEAP advanced the EU's international environmental agenda? What do you consider to be the notable successes, disappointments and the reasons why?