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DRAFT REPORT

on the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme
(2017/2030(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The 7th Environment Action Programme (“7th EAP”) sets out binding objectives for the European Union and its Member States to achieve in the field of environment by 2020.

This report assesses the implementation of the 7th EAP so far and the likelihood of achieving the Programme’s objectives by 2020. It offers recommendations for improved implementation and suggestions for any future EAP.

Key findings¹

The scope of the “7th EAP” is relevant to current needs in the field of environment. The Programme has a moderate influence on environment and climate policies and provides strategic guidance at both EU and Member State level. It helps to establish coherence between different policies as well as long-term vision.

Progress towards the objectives of the 7th EAP is mixed, and there is considerable uncertainty as to whether the 2020 objectives will be achieved. Notwithstanding this uncertainty and the limitations of various indicators, the outlook suggests that most sub-objectives under objective 1 (natural capital) will not be met. The prospects for achieving good results in objective 2 (low carbon economy and resource efficiency) are much better. The outlook for objective 3 (risks to health and well-being) is difficult to assess because of a lack of data.

Although there is general coherence between the 7th EAP and other high level EU policy instruments, there are some important exceptions. In particular, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was regularly identified as lacking coherence with the 7th EAP.

The level of funding available for 7th EAP actions is considered to be inadequate, although this is more of a problem at Member State than EU level. There are considerable difficulties in securing investment for environment and climate policy, although at EU level this is often the result of poorly administered funds rather than a lack of money.

The 7th EAP was widely considered by stakeholders to provide EU added value, and to have a positive impact on citizens, nature and - albeit to a lesser extent - on economic actors.

There is strong support among stakeholders for an 8th EAP. Paradoxically, although many suggestions have been put forward for new sub-objectives in a future EAP, stakeholders also considered that such a programme should be simpler and more focussed than the existing one. More and better indicators would improve monitoring and feedback.

¹ The findings are based on the following sources:

- Environmental Indicator Report (European Environment Agency, first edition, December 2016);
- Environmental Implementation Review (European Commission, first edition, February 2017);
- Relevant reports of the European Court of Auditors;
- The results from a targeted stakeholder consultation on the implementation of the Programme (European Parliamentary Research Service - EPRS, May-September 2017);
- The European Implementation Assessment produced by the European Parliamentary Research Service (DG EPRS).

- *Priority objective 1: to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital*

This is the one of the most problematic objectives in terms of implementation. Despite positive past trends in some areas, indicators suggest that very few 2020 sub objectives will be met. Biodiversity loss and the poor implementation of the Birds & Habitats Directives are repeatedly identified as major obstacles to achieving the EAP's objectives. EU funds are not well mobilised to support the management of the Natura 2000 network, and establishing the marine sites is particularly problematic. The use of Europe's seas remains unsustainable.

- *Priority objective 2: to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy*

There are encouraging past trends in relation to resource efficiency and the low carbon economy, although in the latter case this is partly a result of reduced production during the economic crisis. The transport sector is least likely to reduce carbon emissions by 2020. Waste management is the most problematic issue as regards implementation in this objective, although past trends show slight improvements in waste reduction and recycling. The EU is not yet contributing sufficiently to combatting the global problem of food waste, and the absence of a definition of food waste and a baseline from which to measure the problem remain obstacles to progress. It is unclear whether all sub-objectives will be met by 2020.

- *Priority objective 3: to safeguard the Union's citizens from environmental-related pressures and risks to health and well-being.*

The failure to implement air quality legislation in urban areas is particularly worrying given that air pollution continues to be the number one environmental cause of death in the EU. Some positive past trends are reported with regard to sulphur oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds, ammonia and particulate matter, although reduction of nitrogen oxides has been compromised by the difference between estimated emissions and real driving emissions from diesel vehicles. Levels of ammonia remain stable despite technical measures being available to reduce them. Residential combustion of fossil fuels and transport are the main sources of particulate matter. Although the EU is unlikely to meet its own air quality standards in urban areas by 2020, it is likely to meet international obligations under the Gothenburg Protocol¹. Exposure to environmental noise remains high, and achieving the 2020 sub-objective is unlikely. It is not known whether the EU will achieve its objectives to measure and reduce exposure to chemicals harmful to health and the environment, and to ensure sustainable use of pesticides. Significant progress has been made towards cleaner bathing water and the 2020 targets are expected to be met.

- *Priority objective 4: to maximise the benefits of Union environment legislation by improving implementation*

The Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) provides detailed country reports and identifies implementation problems common to many or all Member States. It also describes the root causes of common problems, including ineffective coordination between authorities in Member States, a lack of administrative capacity and financing, and policy incoherence. The EIR did identify some areas where implementation has improved, notably bathing and drinking

¹ The 1999 Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (the 'Gothenburg Protocol') to the UN Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

water.

The EIR an ongoing process which includes working with the Member States to improve implementation. It is an important opportunity to make progress on key issues such as air quality, noise pollution, water management, waste management and biodiversity. The EIR has been criticised by some stakeholders for only including the Commission and Member States and not civil society actors.

- *Priority objective 5: to improve the knowledge and evidence base for Union environment policy*

The knowledge base is improving in the following areas: the impacts of climate change and species loss on ecosystem services; endocrine disrupters; some of the health and environmental implications of chemicals; the cost-effectiveness of climate change adaptation methods; and nature-based solutions for urban development. Important gaps remain around environmental thresholds (tipping points), the circular economy paradigm, the combined effects of chemicals, nano-materials, hazard identification methods, micro plastics impacts, and the interaction between systemic risks and other health determinants.

Many stakeholders report that available knowledge is not being used by policy makers or being transferred to actors responsible for implementation. Affected areas include: food consumption and waste; endocrine disrupters; bioenergy; the CAP; energy and climate targets; urban planning and design; and impacts of consumption patterns. A lack of political will sometimes prevents the incorporation of knowledge into policy, although regulatory barriers and a lack of resources are also relevant factors.

A number of indicators used to track progress towards the EAP's objectives suffer from limitations and prevent a full analysis of the situation. More and better indicators should be a feature of any future EAP in order to improve monitoring and implementation.

- *Priority objective 6: to secure investment for environment and climate policy and address environmental externalities*

Through a series of special reports, the European Court of Auditors identified multiple problems with the implementation of this objective. EU funding has not achieved the desired results in the following areas: securing ETS market integrity; promoting environmental sustainability of aquaculture and agriculture; improving urban waste water treatment; promoting water ways and rail freight; and supporting the Natura 2000 network. In the cases of cross compliance with the CAP and benefits from investment in biodiversity, it was not possible to make an assessment. In some cases, the implementation of objectives 1 and 2 is being undermined by poorly administered financing rather than a lack of money. Conversely, improvements in drinking water quality (objective 2) were attributed to sound investment of EU funds and further progress was prevented by a lack of financing.

- *Priority objective 7: to improve environmental integration and policy coherence*

Although there is general coherence between other policies and the EAP, there are some notable exceptions. The CAP presents a particular challenge. Intensive agriculture, encouraged by the CAP, has not reduced pressures on natural capital. Rather, it has increased the chemical burden on health and the environment and depleted the resources on which agriculture depends, as well

as obstructing the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and Biodiversity Strategy. Greening initiatives are not thought to have brought sufficient benefits.

In the past, cohesion policy has supported infrastructure projects which have been environmentally damaging, but recent improvements are changing this. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), previously seen as incoherent with EAP objectives, has been improved but will need to be better implemented to realise its potential. TEN-T was identified as posing a challenge in regards to objective 2 (resource efficiency and climate change).

Several Member States have not ratified international agreements which are linked to objectives of the EAP, which implies some incoherence with national policies. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are mainly considered to be an external issue, but their implications for internal policy should be more widely acknowledged to improve coherence between the EAP and the EU's international obligations. The European Commission has taken some positive steps in this regard.

- *Priority objective 8: to enhance the sustainability of the Union's cities*

Assessing the performance and implementation of the EAP in this objective is very challenging given the wide variety of cities in the EU and the lack of specific targets in this area. However, a limited analysis suggests that the policies of EU cities are broadly coherent with the EAP. Mixed progress was reported as regards energy efficiency, sustainable transport and mobility, sustainable urban planning and design, urban biodiversity and sustainable buildings.

- *Priority objective 9: to increase the Union's effectiveness in addressing international environmental and climate related challenges*

There are no clear trends on the effectiveness of the 7th EAP in this area and progress towards the implementation of specific initiatives appears to be mixed. The EU has promoted emissions trading schemes internationally, but has been less successful in ensuring that economic growth is achieved within the carrying capacity of the Earth. There seems to have been little progress addressing the issue of the EU's demand for food and non-food commodities and the environmental impacts this has at international level.

Conclusions and recommendations

The rapporteur is of the view that the 7th EAP provides important strategic guidance for both the EU and Member States. It drives an agenda which has a positive effect on citizens and the environment, and it increases accountability. However, there are several key areas where poor implementation of the EAP is contributing to environmental degradation and posing direct health threats to citizens. These areas include: unsustainable land-use and fishing; biodiversity loss; air quality; environmental noise; waste management; and exposure to chemicals. The failure to implement legislation or make appropriate policies in these areas must be urgently addressed. Further progress towards all the objectives could be achieved by concentrating on three core themes: knowledge gaps, policy coherence, and financing.

The rapporteur supports the adoption of an 8th EAP, but the immediate priority should be the implementation of existing legislation and supporting policies in the areas described above. A future EAP should focus on issues which are fundamental to environmental protection and human health, rather than adding a wide variety of new targets and sub-objectives to an already

ambitious programme. The rapporteur believes that citizens, nature and economic actors would all benefit further if the EAP were simpler and more focussed, and that such an approach would also facilitate better monitoring and feedback. Improving coherence with existing EU policy instruments is essential.

The rapporteur extends her thanks to the EU institutions which supported the production of this draft report through various studies, and to the external stakeholders and Member States who provided extensive input via the stakeholder consultation survey.

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme (2017/2030(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 ‘Living well, within the limits of our planet’¹ (the ‘7th EAP’),
- 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 European Environment Agency’s report of December 2016 entitled ‘Environmental indicator report 2016 – In support to the monitoring of the 7th Environment Action Programme’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 February 2017 entitled ‘The EU Environmental Implementation Review: Common challenges and how to combine efforts to deliver better results’ (COM(2017)0063), and the 28 accompanying country reports,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 27 May 2016 entitled ‘Delivering the benefits of EU environmental policies through a regular Environmental Implementation Review’ (COM(2016)0316),
- having regard to the European Implementation Assessment study of November 2017 on the ‘Mid-term review of the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme (2014-2020)’ carried out by the European Parliamentary Research Service, including its Annex Study,
- having regard to its 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 life²,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 November 2016 entitled ‘Next steps for a sustainable European future’ (COM(2016)0739),
- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A8-0000/2017),

A. whereas the 7th EAP sets legally binding objectives in the fields of environment and

¹ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 171.

² OJ C 258E, 7.9.2013, p. 115.

climate change to be achieved by 2020;

- B. whereas the 7th EAP does not contain a mid-term review clause; whereas the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the implementation of the 7th EAP is an opportunity to assess this EAP's progress and to make evidence-based recommendations for any future EAPs;
- C. whereas progress towards the 2020 objectives has so far been mixed: it is unlikely that objective 1 (protecting natural capital) will be met, but likely that some of the sub-objectives under objective 2 (low carbon economy and resource efficiency) will be met; it is uncertain whether objective 3 (reducing environmental pressures and risks to human health) will be met;
- D. whereas much uncertainty exists with regard to implementation due to a lack of indicators and limitations of existing indicators; whereas knowledge gaps continue to hinder progress on three levels: understanding of risk; formation of appropriate policy to manage and reduce risk; and monitoring the effectiveness of policies;
- E. whereas knowledge often exists but is not used in policy-making or transferred to the parties responsible for implementation; whereas this is often due to a lack of political will and competing interests which are not perceived to be consistent with the EAP or environmental policy goals in general;
- F. whereas incoherence between other high-level EU policy instruments and the EAP is undermining the achievement of the programme's objectives;
- G. whereas there is inadequate funding at some levels for the proper implementation of the 7th EAP; whereas funding at EU level has sometimes failed to deliver the expected results and this has, in multiple cases, been the result of poorly administered financing rather than a lack of money;
- H. whereas the scope of the 7th EAP is relevant to current needs in the field of environmental policy, although many stakeholders recommend the addition of new sub-objectives to increase the programme's relevance in the future;
- I. whereas stakeholders also express a preference for a less complex, more focused EAP;
- J. whereas there is general support for an 8th EAP;

Main conclusions

- 1. Considers that the 7th EAP has a positive influence on environmental policies at EU and Member State level, with benefits for citizens, nature and economic stakeholders;
- 2. Welcomes the positive past trends in regard to numerous sub-objectives of the 7th EAP and the encouraging outlook for some of the 2020 objectives;
- 3. Regrets that the objectives relating to natural capital are unlikely to be met;
- 4. Notes that there is considerable uncertainty regarding the progress towards objectives for human health and well-being; underlines that knowledge gaps and limited indicators

hinder policy development and monitoring;

5. Is concerned that specialised knowledge is not always fully used in policy-making or transferred to the parties responsible for implementation; highlights the examples of bioenergy, endocrine disrupters and food production as areas where evidence of risks to human health and the environment has been sidelined;
6. Considers that coherence with other high-level EU policy instruments is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the 7th EAP;
7. Welcomes the improvements in the common fisheries policy (CFP) and cohesion policy, which have increased coherence with the 7th EAP; regrets, however, that despite improvements to the regulatory framework the CFP continues to suffer from poor implementation;
8. Recognises that the common agricultural policy (CAP) presents challenges to the achievement of the EAP's objectives, particularly as regards resource-intensive production and biodiversity;
9. Underlines that protecting and enhancing food security in the long term by preventing environmental damage should be a key priority of the CAP;
10. Recalls that in the context of climate change and a growing world population, the rising demand for diets rich in animal protein is exerting significant environmental pressures on agricultural land and increasingly fragile ecosystems; underlines that diets with excessive amounts of animal fat are increasingly linked to the non-communicable disease burden;
11. Welcomes the Commission's 2016 commitment to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into EU policies and initiatives;
12. Welcomes the improvements brought by EU-funded projects as regards drinking water quality; regrets the missed opportunities to deliver better results from EU funds in other areas related to the EAP;
13. Notes that the biggest environmental threats to health are most evident in urban areas and will directly affect more of the EU's population by 2030;
14. Welcomes the progress on reducing certain atmospheric pollutants but regrets the persistent problems with air quality, to which emissions from road transport are a significant contributory factor;

Recommendations

15. Requests that the relevant EU institutions and agencies prioritise research and close knowledge gaps in the following areas: environmental thresholds (tipping points), the circular economy paradigm, the combined effects of chemicals, nanomaterials, hazard identification methods, the impacts of microplastics, the interaction between systemic risks and other health determinants, soil and land use and invasive alien species;
16. Calls for the EU institutions, as well as national and regional governments where

appropriate, to make full use of available specialist knowledge about risks to the environment and human health when making and monitoring policies;

17. Asks the European Environment Agency to increase the quantity and quality of indicators used to monitor progress;
 18. Calls for infrastructure projects, particularly those related to TEN-T, to fully consider environmental impacts at regional level as well as project level; notes that coherence between different environmental policies is also relevant; highlights the possible effects of hydropower on freshwater supplies and soils, and of sea-based renewable energy infrastructure on marine biodiversity;
 19. Urges further reform of the CAP to incentivise a food production system which is better aligned with environmental needs and which safeguards food security now and in the future; calls for farming systems and agricultural produce with low environmental impact and/or which provide environmental services not currently supplied by the market (e.g. protection of freshwater supplies and soil, natural flood defences and natural pollination) to be rewarded under a reformed CAP;
 20. Calls on the Commission to significantly improve the use and administration of EU funds for the EAP's objectives; calls for better monitoring, transparency and accountability;
 21. Invites the Court of Auditors to analyse expenditure in other areas relevant to the EAP which have not been included in its analysis thus far;
 22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support improved proposal-writing for regional and city level projects so that EU funds are more accessible, particularly as regards green infrastructure, biodiversity, and the Birds and Habitats Directives;
 23. Calls on the Member States to redouble their efforts to implement air quality legislation; calls on regional authorities to provide a supporting framework, particularly with regard to urban planning and local policy-making, to improve health outcomes in some of the worst affected areas;
 24. Calls on regional and local authorities to adapt city planning and infrastructure for electric vehicles as soon as possible;
 25. Calls on the Commission to propose an 8th EAP which focuses on the most challenging areas of environmental policy-making including knowledge gaps, policy coherence, financing and air quality;
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26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Court of Auditors, the European Environment Agency, as well as to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.