



EUROCITIES STATEMENT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 6th ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMME

The European Commission adopted the Sixth Environmental Action Programme (6EAP) for 2002 to 2012. It is currently being reviewed and the Commission will present its assessment by mid-2011 with the aim to propose a new framework in 2012

The added value of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme

Framework for environmental policy involving all institutions: The 6EAP provided a 10 year framework for the EU's environmental policy with the aim of ensuring a high level of protection of the environment and human health and quality of life. It decoupled environmental pressures and economic growth whilst being consistent with the principle of subsidiarity and respecting the diversity of conditions across the various regions in the EU. Since the EAPs started in 1973, the 6EAP was the first to be adopted under codecision. This was significant because it represented a formal commitment from all EU Institutions.

6EAP priorities integrated into other EU policies: The 4 priorities of the 6EAP (climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health, and natural resources and waste) were the basis for the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Strategy and the integration of environment into all EU policies. The seven thematic strategies developed under these set out specific objectives and actions. Over the years, the priorities have been further developed and have been successfully integrated in other EU policies and strategies.

Higher profile for environment at EU level: Although that the 6EAP has not achieved all its objectives, and despite some of the thematic strategies being heavily delayed in their adoption, the 6EAP has helped raise the profile of environment at EU level. It has also helped with the adoption of some environmental legislation that would probably not have gone through without the action programme.

Achievements from a city perspective

Provided a platform for discussion: The 6EAP stimulated a change as it provided a dedicated platform for discussion between cities and the EU institutions. For example, cities were directly involved in the discussions that developed some of the thematic strategies (in particular, the ones on the urban environment, air pollution and soil).

Inspired new initiatives: The 6EAP provided the basis for many initiatives on environment related themes that are important for cities, for example the Covenant of Mayors and an EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change. The noise directive with its action plans and the ambient air directive with its air quality plans were clearly linked to the objectives of the 6EAP. Some of these directives are already in place and create a framework of obligations which all cities need to meet, creating a level playing field (e.g. the use of strict source-based targets for ambient air or the life-cycle orientated approach in the waste directive). The notion of quality of life also grew as an important theme for environmental, social and

economic policies. The thematic strategies also promoted a more holistic approach and a more systematic process for monitoring policies.

Strengthened the urban dimension: The urban dimension in environmental policy was emphasised through the thematic strategy on the urban environment. The relevance given to integrated environmental planning in this thematic strategy has been a stimulus for many cities for institutional capacity building in the field of environment. Although we supported the intention to develop legislation under this thematic strategy, which did not happen, the involvement of the urban stakeholders in this dossier opened up a new channel for engaging with cities in policy making.

Working in a new context: future of the strategy

Increasing urbanisation: Trends continue within Europe and world-wide towards greater urbanisation. In a European context, our city model of well-managed urban density provides the most sustainable path for the future. Cities and their metropolitan areas are key to improving the quality of life for the majority of those living in Europe: 75% of the population lives in cities, and they account for 75% of carbon emissions, 80% of energy use and 85% of the EU's GDP.

Europe 2020 - toward smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: The EU's new ten year strategy provides the basis to underpin economic recovery and improve Europe's global competitiveness, without neglecting the challenges of climate change, environmental protection and social inclusion. Achieving the Europe 2020 objectives on the ground however will require the full commitment of Europe's big cities. The goals of Europe 2020 can be combined and strengthened on the ground in our cities, where the social, environmental and economic challenges are addressed through integrated approaches to local development. Crucial to this will be the involvement of cities in the design and implementation of policies and strategies, and the development of financial instruments that put cities in the driving seat, can be coordinated and combined and that contribute to integrated development.

Facing a new socio-economic context: The current climate of drastic public sector budget cuts across Europe is posing a severe threat to local governments. Despite the potential of green growth sectors, the environment sector has nevertheless been considerably affected by this. As city budgets are cut, the pressures on basic services will increase, as more inhabitants find themselves in more precarious situations. It is essential that in this context cities are still able to progress in the transition to towards a low carbon economy.

Legal context and constitutional framework: The new Lisbon Treaty clearly refers to the role of local and regional government as stakeholders in EU policy. The new treaty objective of territorial cohesion also underlines the need for all EU policies to consider the territorial dimension. These developments are important from the perspective of cities, in terms of strengthening the role they have in shaping EU policy and the obligation that regional and local dimensions of EU policies are more explicitly addressed. For us, these are important factors to empower cities and strengthening their ability to deliver successfully on environmental targets.

Our recommendations on the review of the 6EAP

1. **An ambitious vision and clear strategy:** We believe the EU needs an ambitious policy framework with a clear environmental dimension, whether this comes in the shape of a 7EAP or another strategy. Well-defined environmental principles, objectives, targets and timeframes are needed. Promoting an integrated approach is essential, both in terms of policies and funding instruments. The new strategy must be developed in close consultation with stakeholders.
2. **Provide the space to act:** Cities need space to act, either through an urban thematic strategy in an environmental programme or a more general process. Integrated local development in and around our big cities is essential to addressing social, economic and environmental issues together and coordinating longer-term planning. Working on different spatial levels (neighbourhood, city, city-region, region) and through broad-based local partnerships. Empowering big cities to take the lead in this process will help Europe reach its goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
3. **Stimulate the change needed:** We would like to see changes at EU level to improve the mechanisms for monitoring environmental policies. This should include the means to improve the implementation of environmental policy at national level (including the use of source based targets, encouraging the national level to cooperate more closely with their cities to provide the necessary tools - training, guidance, orientations, expertise). We would like to see a continuation of the approach to integrate an environmental dimension in all EU policies and the development of measurable, reportable and verifiable sustainable objectives.
4. **Set ambitious goals and promote innovation:** Not all of the objectives set out in 2002 have been achieved. But it is important to be ambitious and to promote innovation in solutions, partnerships, working methods and financing. Cities are uniquely placed to pilot new solutions as they provide a critical mass of inhabitants, economic activity, research institutions and businesses for testing and rolling-out new ideas.
5. **Improve the instruments available for the diversity of needs:** In order to face the challenges of the current context, we will need even better instruments. From environmental governance, to information sharing, legislation, economic incentives, better implementation procedures and a wider range of funding instruments and options. In doing this, it is important to bear in mind the considerable differences that still exist between countries, regions and cities in Europe. This will mean some flexibility to allow territories to cope with their different circumstances.
6. **Design funding instruments for integrated development:** We need a future EU budget and framework that will support our ambition towards low carbon economies. Having the potential to combine different EU funds with other sources of financing, including from the private sector where appropriate, will strengthen the ability of cities to address physical regeneration, social inclusion, environmental protection and climate change in an integrated way. Existing instruments will clearly not be enough, coupled with the pressures on public budgets that make co-funding extremely difficult. New innovative models for releasing and combining funding are required. This should include consideration of the potential of using revenues from the Emissions Trading Scheme to fund local climate policies, given the percentage of emissions that are produced in cities.
7. **Speak to your cities:** A regular dialogue with cities on the development of future EU environmental strategies and policies will help ensure that they are designed in the way that will best tackle the reality on the ground. Better designed policies will mean better implementation, and if we fail to meet our environmental targets in our big cities, we will fail to meet them across Europe.
8. **Bridge the gap:** It is essential that we bridge the gap that currently exists between scientific research and the urban reality. Cities can make even faster progress if research can provide a timely contribution, with appropriate data, innovative tools and technical solutions.