

## **Environment: Policy Review shows achievements, and challenges ahead**

***The European Commission has adopted its 2007 Environment Policy Review, which reports on EU policy developments from last year, focuses on the key challenges ahead and looks in detail at EU and Member States' environmental trends and policy performance.***

Presenting the Environment Policy Review 2007, Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "The year 2007 was a turning point in EU environment policy. The main commitments under the 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme have been delivered. Environment issues are now firmly at the top of the political agenda, and command the attention of decision-makers, the media and the public. This is good news. But there are also reasons for concern. Implementation of EU environment legislation is lagging behind. We also need to prepare for the major challenges ahead: defining a long-term strategic vision for sustainable consumption and production, adaptation to the inevitable climatic changes, and the protection of biodiversity. We should take advantage of the relatively light legislative calendar in 2009 to advance on these issues. "

### **EU environment policy framework is in place**

The Commission has delivered almost all its main commitments under the 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme. The energy and climate change package endorsed by the European Council in 2007, and translated into concrete policy proposals by the Commission in 2008, will firmly set Europe on the path to a low-carbon economy. All seven of the thematic strategies have been presented to the co-legislator and accompanying legislative proposals have been adopted or are being examined by Council and Parliament. The long awaited chemicals legislation REACH, reforming the way we deal with chemicals, was adopted and the European Chemicals Agency started operating. The Environmental Liability Directive came into force and the Commission presented a proposal for a new Industrial Emissions Directive which extends the scope of the previous legislation and tightens emission limits. Important financial instruments for environment policy became operational, e.g. LIFE+ with a budget of € 2 143 million for the period 2007-13.

### **Further efforts needed for improving implementation**

But while the policy framework is in place, implementation of EU environment legislation by Member States is often slow or incomplete. A majority of the open infringement cases concern bad application of EU environment law, but there are also cases concerning lack of, or improper transposition of directives. In 2008 and 2009 the Commission will step up its efforts to support Member States and their authorities on implementation, including through better information exchange, guidance and training. The Commission also decided to set out criteria for identifying infringement cases which need most immediate and intensive Commission legal action.

## **New impetus necessary to face global environmental challenges ahead**

Three major challenges require urgent attention.

### **Sustainability**

The current world economy is not sustainable. With growing populations and consumption demands, the global economy of the future will have to be cleaner, leaner and smarter. As an important step in this process, the Commission will shortly present an Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy. Its overall objective is to identify and overcome barriers to sustainable production and consumption that have either not been addressed yet or can be overcome by strengthening and better co-ordinating existing policies.

### **Climate change adaptation**

Policy-makers have to address two distinct issues on climate change. The first is to limit temperature increases, and the EU is addressing this. But even if the world stopped emitting greenhouse gases tomorrow, the climate would still continue to change for many decades. So we need to adapt too in order to manage the unavoidable. Adaptation means e.g. finding ways to use water more efficiently, to develop crops that can tolerate drought and to strengthen coastal flood defences. In 2008, the Commission will present a White Paper on Adaptation which will examine ways to integrate adaptation principles into common policies.

### **Protection of biodiversity**

Biodiversity loss presents a global threat, just as serious as climate change. In one way it is more worrying since there is no way to reverse extinction. Recent reports show that the EU target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 will not be achieved without additional efforts. In 2008, the Commission will therefore boost efforts for the full implementation of its Biodiversity Action Plan, for extending the Natura 2000 conservation network both in terrestrial and marine areas and will also further explore the value of biodiversity services within the process of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity launched at COP-9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## **Background**

The Environment Policy Review is accompanied by an Annex that contains more detailed analysis of the main developments in EU environment policy. It also includes recent findings, detailed statistical information and highlights from Member States' environmental policy actions in 2007 and to come in the near future.

### **All documents can be found at:**

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/policyreview.htm>