



Climate Change – European Parliament adopts resolution on the climate change adaptation White Paper

14 May 2010

Summary: On 6 May 2010 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Commission White Paper on adapting to climate change in Europe, published in April 2009. The resolution had a strong focus on building ecosystem resilience, preventing forest fires and the effective implementation of existing water-related legislation. The ‘climate-proofing’ of the EU Budget was called for, as it is soon to be reviewed. Several areas were flagged up for future work and research, including a roadmap for the reform of environmentally harmful subsidies, the development of a European climate and transport package and the increase in scientific knowledge in certain areas.

Background

In April 2009 the Commission published the White Paper ‘Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action’ (COM(2009)147)¹ (see IEEP Analysis Briefings: 9 April 2009 and 9 April 2009).

European Parliament adopts resolution on adaptation White Paper

On 6 May 2010 the European Parliament adopted a resolution² on the White Paper. The resolution welcomed many parts of the Paper and called for renewed effort in others. There was a strong emphasis on ecosystems (both the importance of building ecosystem resilience and the significance of ecosystems services in and of themselves) and on forest conservation, particularly in relation to the danger of forest fires. The importance of the role of existing legislation was emphasised, new or renewed efforts were called for in some policy areas and further research needs were highlighted.

The importance of implementation

The need for effective implementation of several pieces of water-related legislation was underlined, in order to maximise effective adaptation: the Water Framework Directive, the Floods Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The importance of relevant River Basin Management Plans from Member States was emphasised, as was the need for ambitious, comprehensive and realistic National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAPs).

New measures

The Parliament urged the Commission to consider several actions that would be instrumental in meeting a number of overarching climate goals while in some cases complementing adaptation needs:

- to come up with a comprehensive European climate and **transport** package (further to the Commission's recent strategy on clean and energy efficient vehicles (see IEEP Overview Briefing: 30 April 2010)) as well as an effective urban mobility policy;
- the creation of a 'blue carbon fund' for the protection and management of coastal and marine ecosystems as well as ocean carbon;
- to update the EU **Forestry** Strategy and introduce agro-forestry measures including afforestation in Mediterranean areas; and
- to seriously consider making targets on **energy efficiency** binding.

The **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) could have a 'central role' in contributing to adaptation to climate change, according to the resolution, though there little detail was provided with respect to agriculture. The Parliament also called upon Member States to 'shoulder their responsibility' by introducing national legislation to protect **soils**, in the absence of such a European Directive.

In light of its upcoming review, the **EU Budget** was not forgotten; it was described as unrepresentative of EU policy priorities in the adaptation field. Climate change, particularly adaptation, was prescribed a higher priority in the new Budget, and the need for the Budget to be 'climate-proofed' was underlined.

Further work needed

In several areas knowledge was felt to be lacking. The Parliament called for further research in the following areas:

- the reaction of **forests** to higher levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere, droughts and higher temperatures;
- the effects of changing currents on the movement of certain **marine species**;
- the impact of climate change on **urban** micro-climates (for example, urban heat islands); and
- in-depth analysis of future **energy** scenarios, including the effects of climate change on **electricity** production, both by renewable and fossil fuel sources; the cooling needs of thermal power stations including the reactors of nuclear power stations; and the increasing cooling needs of buildings.

The EEA was called upon for the swift development of vulnerability indicators. The Parliament also called for climate change data to be made publicly accessible, as it considered it to be a 'public good'.

Future developments:

- 30 June 2010: National renewable energy action plans (NREAPs) due to be submitted by all Member States; and
- By the end of 2012: The Parliament called upon the Commission to complete a review of the progress in implementing the adaptation White Paper.

Summary:

References

1. Commission of the European Communities, White Paper - Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action, (COM(2009)147), Brussels, 01/04/2009,
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0147:FIN:EN:PDF>
2. European Parliament, Non-legislative resolution of 6 May 2010 on the Commission White Paper: 'Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action' (2009/2152(INI)), 06/05/2010,
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