



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 – 2014

Committee on Regional Development

2009/2152(INI)

1.2.2010

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the Commission White Paper entitled ‘Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action’
(2009/2152(INI))

Rapporteur: Salvatore Caronna

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Takes the view that climate change is a crucial challenge of our time. It is now clear that it has implications for the environment, human health and spatial planning, and is making it more difficult for all countries to progress towards sustainable development;
2. Welcomes the publication of the European Commission's White Paper entitled 'Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action'; emphasises that climate change presents a challenge with a marked regional impact that calls for a coordinated approach at European Union level, encompassing the various EU policies and levels of intervention: European, national, regional and local;
3. Takes the view that the impact of climate change varies between sectors and European regions, as shown by the Commission study 'Regions 2020'¹: the regions under greatest pressure from climate change are those located in southern and eastern Europe, particularly island and coastal regions, the outermost regions and areas with a high risk of water shortages, with a danger that regional disparities will subsequently increase, even among regions in the same country;
4. Regrets that during the current programming period (2007-2013) the Member States are allocating only 3% (EUR 9 billion) of total funding to measures promoting energy efficiency and renewable energies as part of operational programmes, and that investment in the new Member States is even lower at 2.4%;
5. Recognises the urgent need to react promptly to global warming, both by taking legally binding measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and by introducing regional adaptation plans and proactive adaptation measures such as widespread reforestation initiatives at European, national, regional and local level, as well as through cross-border cooperation, with a view to limiting the damage;
6. Is firmly convinced of the need for the European Union to retain and reinforce its leadership role in the international fight against global warming, and believes that any delay in taking such action will heighten the risk of adverse environmental, economic and social effects and be likely to generate higher costs;
7. Takes the view that, by means of intelligent energy policies that actively promote renewable energy sources, decentralised energy supply and energy efficiency in their territories, the regions can not only contribute to fighting the effects of climate change, but also open up new economic opportunities and prospects for their citizens;
8. Notes that sectors of strategic importance to geographically peripheral regions, such as agriculture, should not be shouldered with excessive burdens as part of the framework for

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/regions2020/pdf/regions2020_en.pdf, (November 2008).

action to adapt to climate change, thereby jeopardising the future of sustainable rural communities;

9. Takes the view that only close cooperation at all levels of governance (the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities), together with cooperation and an ongoing exchange of information with countries in the EU's neighbourhood, will enable the European Union to implement a strategy of transformation towards a low-carbon society;
10. Recognises the need to harmonise the various fields of action, on the one hand by fully involving regional and local bodies at the stages of designing, developing and implementing national strategies and action plans for combating climate change, and on the other hand by harnessing strategic regional planning and incorporating all the factors connected with climate change;
11. Recognises, therefore, the need to ensure, on the one hand, that the adaptation strategy is integrated into European Union policies, with a special focus on the coordination of actions and measures under the EU's agricultural, regional and environmental policies, and, on the other hand, that these policies are consistent with the adaptation strategy; emphasises the key role played by local and regional authorities and the need for a bottom-up approach taking account of the differences among natural habitats in Europe, in full accordance with the subsidiarity principle; is convinced that local authorities will be better equipped to find political solutions to their own needs;
12. Welcomes the White Paper's suggestion that a mechanism be established for sharing information; hopes that this will be operational by 2011, and that models and prediction tools will also have been developed by then; invites the Member States and local and regional authorities to publicise and exchange their practices in relation to all aspects of climate change adaptation policies, particularly measures pertaining to energy efficiency, waste management and the development of low-emission transport infrastructure;
13. Recommends that a climate change monitoring platform be created with a view to helping regional and local bodies to acquire and exchange local experiences and good practices in the climate field;
14. Considers that the outermost regions, owing to their special circumstances – as set out in Article 349 of the Treaty of Lisbon – and their geographical location in the tropics, are susceptible to the consequences of climate change and should consequently receive special attention from the Commission; calls on the Commission, therefore, to develop an impact assessment and specific action plan for the outermost regions and to support information exchanges and exchanges of good practices between local authorities in those regions and regional authorities in third countries in their surrounding geographical areas;
15. Considers it essential to pursue policies, not least at regional and local level, that make both public and private investment and certain administrative acts (such as planning permission and development plans) subject to a climate impact assessment, so as to encourage EU investment in infrastructure of high environmental quality; calls for strict care to be taken to ensure that an evaluation of climate change effects forms part of the process of approving proposals for EU-funded projects connected with energy efficiency,

waste management and infrastructure development;

16. Notes that geographically peripheral regions, especially coastal regions, may have an abundant supply of renewable energies which can contribute to their adaptation to climate change;
17. Takes the view that, from the micro-climatic point of view, construction that prevents water from running off land in densely populated areas and towns should be avoided;
18. Urges the Commission to use cohesion policy to promote the development of renewable resources, with greater synergies between the areas of research and development and regional development policy, and to remove any administrative barriers to bringing such resources on stream;
19. Welcomes the Commission's decision to set up an Impact and Adaptation Steering Group (IASG), and calls for local and regional authorities to be fully and actively involved in this group and its procedures, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle;
20. Reiterates that measures to mitigate the effects of climate change may serve as an opportunity to arrive at a sustainable growth model, which could then be adapted to other countries outside the EU, and that the transition to a carbon-free economy could represent a significant step forward in terms of creating new jobs;
21. Asks the Commission to ensure that the next financial perspective includes sufficient funding to implement effective climate change adaptation policies at all levels of governance; further recommends that the Member States and the regions take into account the possibility of harnessing the mechanisms provided by the structural funds for developing longer-term sustainable projects; emphasises that the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) exists to address urgent needs and to express EU solidarity with affected regions;
22. Stresses that the objectives of climate change and environmental protection should be integrated into the EU cohesion policy's convergence and growth objectives, without replacing the traditional tasks of structural policy.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	25.1.2010
Result of final vote	+: 31 -: 8 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Charalampos Angourakis, Jean-Paul Basset, Victor Boştinaru, Sophie Briard Auconie, Zuzana Brzobohatá, John Bufton, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Ricardo Cortés Lastra, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Elie Hoarau, Seán Kelly, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Miroslav Mikolášik, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Franz Obermayr, Jan Olbrycht, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Markus Pieper, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Michael Theurer, Viktor Uspaskich, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Ivars Godmanis, Karin Kadenbach, Veronica Lope Fontagné, Elisabeth Schroedter, Richard Seeber, Sabine Verheyen, Iuliu Winkler