Views on the new action programme from Citizens, Consumer Groups and Trade Unions

Thirty one responses were received from individual citizens, one from a consumer organisation and one from a trade union body. The relevant comments are summarised in this document. A number of more detailed policy suggestions have not been included here for reasons of practicality.

1) **A central theme for Europe.** A number of citizens question the European Union’s work on economic growth and trade liberalisation, suggesting that such a focus would not bring added benefits to most Europeans. They advocate more fundamental integration of environmental considerations into the work of the Union. On the other hand however, some feel that trade should be encouraged, especially with developing countries, to enrich their population and provide jobs.

2) **Agriculture.** Comments received on this topic suggest reform of the Union’s agricultural policy to protect biodiversity, decreasing use of chemicals in farming by supporting only ecologically sound practices and addressing groundwater pollution by reducing fertiliser use.

3) **Taxation and economic instruments.** Contributors want to see a decrease in taxation on environmentally friendly goods, and a more general structural change from taxing goods, such as labour, to taxing environmentally poor behaviour such as emission of pollutants. Specific instruments suggested are a fuel duty escalator with the proceeds hypothecated for spending on public transport, the use of economic measures to encourage substitution for less hazardous substances and a tax on unsolicited mail to save paper.

4) **Information and education.** Using the new programme to develop an information campaign to educate citizens is suggested by several contributors. The use of the most recent scientific data should be used to support and “sell” the policies it contains. The possibility is also raised of the programme containing concrete actions which individuals can take to improve the environment. Another response recommends using legislation to encourage public environmental auditing of companies, thereby raising awareness. More formally, there are a number of comments regarding the need to integrate the environment into education, with one proposing that all EU funded education initiatives should have a green module. Eco-labelling to allow informed choices is also mentioned.

5) **Elaboration of the programme.** A step-wise approach, ensuring consensus is achieved at each step, is proposed by one correspondent. Another asks that, as well as setting out the goals for the environment, the programme sets out ways that development cannot proceed – that is, provide some boundaries. A third comments that while the current sectoral approach should continue, sectors need to be more rigorously defined.

6) **Specific policy suggestions.**

- The provision of EU funding should be conditional on the inclusion of environmental concerns
• Tough controls are needed on greenhouse gases, including the introduction of emissions trading and renewable energy targets of 15% by 2005.

• The new programme should seek to boost recycling, particularly of plastics. Waste incineration should be avoided.

• If soil erosion is addressed, better modelling should be used.

• Car free city centres should be supported.

• Pets should be protected, especially in big cities.

• Given the increase in chemicals in the environment ways of testing for effects on humans without using live animals must be further developed and stimulated.

• The programme should address tourism on an institutional basis – focusing on the environmental pressures rather than the economic benefits.

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