Regional administrations’ and organisations’ views on the new action programme

Ten responses were received from a variety of bodies representing regional and local governments or governmental organisations. This note sets out the main issues emerging from their input to consultation on the new environmental action programme but does not contain those points which are already reflected in the accompanying summaries of comments made by other groups. Many, more detailed proposals were made, which cannot be included in this summary, but which have all been noted by DG Environment.

**Status** – there is a general desire for the new programme to define the roles of local authorities and regional administrations in European policy making. Many submissions point out the role that such bodies play in the eventual implementation of environmental policy, especially in the crucial areas of waste management, transport and spatial and land-use planning. There are calls for further and more rigorous consultation and even empowerment of such bodies, as there appears to be a sentiment that regional administrations are often hampered by national Governments in attempts to progress towards sustainability.

**Structure** – there is support for a framework document including qualitative targets. Some submissions request detailed policies and actions, especially at citizen level, while others advocate more detailed policies being elaborated in thematic actions plans where appropriate. There is a strong focus on monitoring and the need for indicators and performance measures to be built into the new programme.

**Issues** – urban sustainability is clearly a priority for a number of the respondees, who see it as a particular problem with specific challenges. Again the European Environment Agency’s report is seen as a useful starting point for identifying environmental priorities, and as well as a focus on waste, spatial planning and transport, resource use, climate change chemicals, GMO’s, soil, noise and water quality are mentioned. One submission highlights the close involvement of regional governments in biodiversity policies, especially the relation between planning, tourism and biodiversity. Also public health is high on the agenda, given the effects of pollution in urban areas.

**Green procurement** – most inputs mention green procurement and the role that public sector regional bodies can play in stimulating markets and supporting products. However, they note that there is little coherence between different bodies. They ask for environmentally sound procurement to be supported strongly in policy terms and for there to be some guidelines and training available, further studies into the benefits (to justify their actions) and support of knowledge exchange.

**Strategic environmental assessment** – interestingly, this featured several times as a useful tool. It has been mentioned by other stakeholder groups but not with such emphasis.

**Citizens** – given the proximity of regional and local governments to citizens it is hardly surprising that information and education are seen as important. Current arrangements are termed weak. The new programme should support citizen involvement by identifying concrete actions that can be taken, explaining the
responsibility that must be taken for certain impacts of consumption or individual behaviour, as well as including a strategy to communicate the issues themselves. It is also commented that the EU should do more to make citizens aware of its own role and to mark progress. The new programme should link local and global initiatives such as Agenda 21 and contain a mechanism to advertise the EU’s successes.

**Enlargement** – there is much that cities can do with regard to accession countries, especially in the field of transfer of knowledge on best practice. The links between cities are good and should be supported by the new programme. It is suggested that such exchange will prevent cities in accession countries from moving down an “unsustainability” path, by informing them of current members’ past mistakes.

**Implementation** – some comments are made, reinforcing those made elsewhere, that the fifth action programme was groundbreaking and the provisions in it need to fully implemented before embarking on a further tranche of policies. There is a suggestion that the accumulated acquis should be reduced, as some is no longer necessary to address the problems of this century.

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