

The general program of action of the Union for the Environment, ie the new action plan, has six priority goals that must be achieved by 2030, namely: climate change mitigation, adaptation to climate change, transition to a green and circular economy, pollution reduction, biodiversity protection and reducing the EU's production and consumption footprint.

The European Parliament (EP) has adopted by a large majority a new environmental action plan for the period 2021-2030. This is the eighth General Program of Action of the Union for the Environment, the aim of which is to accelerate the implementation of the Green Plan, ie the green transition.

"The Union's overall program of action for the environment until 2030 can indeed mark a turning point in the next decade, which is crucial. With this report, I call on you to respond to the urgent need for strong environmental legislation," said Grace O'Sullivan, rapporteur on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, noting that, after much debate on the subject, finally time to start acting.

As noted by the European Commission's Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius, environmental action programs have managed the Union's environmental policies since 1970, and the previous program expired in 2020, after which the Commission proposed a new program to turn to the circular economy, a pollution-free economy with a zero emission rate. As one of the basic goals of this program, Sinkevičius pointed out the achievement of better legislation when it comes to the green transition. At the debate, ahead of the vote, MEPs generally supported the new action plan, stressing that immediate action was needed and that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should no longer be the only indicator of society's progress and well-being.

"There is no point in continuing to run for GDP growth on a planet that is almost at the end of its power," said French MP Marie Toussaint of the Green Club.

The Swedish MP Jytte Guteland (S&D) also pointed out that "this is the eighth time we have adopted such a program" and that "we must accelerate the green transition and the realization of the Green Plan and the goals of the Paris Agreement." The Commission's commissioner agreed with these criticisms, saying that new indicators of progress need to be established, at national, regional and EU level. Swedish MP Emma Wisner (Renew) was silent for part of her speaking time, the first in this House, to conclude: "Now no words can save us, we must start acting."

The announcement of the abolition of subsidies for fossil fuels by 2025 caused the most controversy during the discussion on the new environmental action plan.

"The goal of continuous economic growth is fundamentally unsustainable. (...) We are

spinning in circles, talking about sustainability, and at the same time encouraging practices that are destroying the planet, "said rapporteur O'Sullivan, warning that governments must stop giving subsidies that are harmful to the environment, including those for fossil fuels. But Polish MP Krzysztof Jurgiel (European Conservatives and Reformists) has sharply criticized the plan.

"The abolition of all fossil fuel subsidies, at all levels, by 2025 at the latest, makes this action plan completely unacceptable. For example, for Poland this is impossible given that fossil fuels make up the largest part of our energy, so I will have to vote against, "said Jurgiel.

Referring to this and similar comments, the Commission's Commissioner Sinkevičius said that "there are already proposals to abolish harmful subsidies" and that additional assessments will decide whether new commitments are needed and whether they should really be included in the general environmental program or in turn, they should be part of special sectoral instruments ".

As announced by Sinkevičius, after the adoption of the new environmental action plan, discussions on the same are underway as soon as the negotiating mandate is adopted, and the first meeting in the trilogue between Parliament, Council and Commission should take place in early September. The new environmental action plan was supported by all Croatian MEPs except Mislav Kolakušić (independent), who voted against, and Ladislav Iličić, Ruža Tomašić's successor, from the Croatian Sovereignists, who abstained.

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