

# DECISIONS

**DECISION (EU) 2022/591 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL**  
**of 6 April 2022**  
**on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030**

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 192(3) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee <sup>(1)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions <sup>(2)</sup>,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure <sup>(3)</sup>,

Whereas:

- (1) In accordance with Article 192(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), successive general environment action programmes have guided the development and coordination of Union environment policy and provided the framework for Union action in the field of the environment and climate since 1973.
- (2) Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(4)</sup> established the 7th Environment Action Programme (7th EAP). The 7th EAP sets out the Union's environmental agenda for the period up to 31 December 2020 as well as a long-term vision for 2050.
- (3) The Commission report of 15 May 2019 on the evaluation of the 7th EAP concluded that the 2050 vision and priority objectives were still valid; that the 7th EAP has helped to provide more predictable, faster and better-coordinated action in environment policy and that the structure and enabling framework of the 7th EAP have helped create synergies, thus making environment policy more effective and efficient. Moreover, it concluded that the 7th EAP anticipated the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ('UN 2030 Agenda') by its insistence that economic growth and social well-being depend on a healthy natural resource base, facilitated delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and enabled the Union to speak with one voice on the global stage on climate and environmental matters, but that progress related to nature protection, health and integrating environmental concerns into other policy areas was not sufficient. It also concluded that there could

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 123, 9.4.2021, p. 76.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 106, 26.3.2021, p. 44.

<sup>(3)</sup> Position of the European Parliament of 10 March 2022 (not yet published in the Official Journal) and decision of the Council of 29 March 2022.

<sup>(4)</sup> Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 'Living well, within the limits of our planet' (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 171).

have been more consideration of social issues in the 7th EAP, by building on the existing links between environment and social policy, as regards, for example, the impact on vulnerable groups, jobs, social inclusion and inequality. Moreover, the Commission report noted that, despite increasingly ambitious environmental targets in many policy domains, spending on environmental protection had remained constant in Europe over many years (approximately 2 % of GDP) and that the failure to implement environmental legislation costs the Union economy around EUR 55 000 000 000 each year in health costs and in direct costs to the environment. The Commission report noted that the 7th EAP's implementation could have been reinforced by a stronger monitoring mechanism.

- (4) According to the European Environment Agency (EEA) in its report 'The European environment – state and outlook 2020, Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe' ('SOER 2020'), there is a unique window of opportunity for the Union in the next decade to show global leadership on sustainability by tackling the urgent sustainability challenges that require systemic solutions. Systemic change entails a fundamental, transformative and cross-cutting form of change that implies major shifts and reorientation in system goals, incentives, technologies, social practices and norms, as well as in knowledge systems and governance approaches. As stated in SOER 2020, one of the most important factors underlying Europe's persistent environmental and sustainability challenges is that they are inextricably linked to economic activities and lifestyles, in particular the societal systems that provide Europeans with necessities such as food, energy and mobility. Ensuring policy coherence with, and full implementation of, existing environmental policies would take Europe a long way to achieving its environmental goals up to 2030 and achieving the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.
- (5) The Commission responded to the challenges identified in SOER 2020 by adopting the communication of 11 December 2019 entitled 'The European Green Deal', a new growth strategy for the twin green and digital transition that aims to transform the Union into a fair and prosperous society, with a sustainable, competitive, climate-neutral and resource-efficient economy, and to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital whilst improving the quality of life of current and future generations. Swiftly achieving climate and environmental targets while protecting the health and well-being of people from environmental risks and impacts and ensuring a just and inclusive transition should be the priority. Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(5)</sup> enshrines in law the Union target to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.
- (6) In its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency, the European Parliament underlined that immediate and ambitious action is crucial and urged the Commission to take concrete action, including by ensuring that all relevant future legislative and budgetary proposals are fully aligned with the objective of limiting global warming to under 1,5 °C and that they are not contributing to biodiversity loss, and by addressing inconsistencies of current Union policies on the climate and environment emergency, in particular through a far-reaching reform of its agricultural, trade, transport, energy and infrastructure investment policies.
- (7) The European Green Deal underpins the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan, which promotes investment in sectors which are key for the green and digital transition, in order to build resilience and create growth and jobs in a fair and inclusive society. The Recovery and Resilience Facility, which will power the Union's economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, together with the Union budget for 2021-2027, is also based on the priority objectives set out in the European Green Deal. Furthermore, all initiatives under the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan are to respect, where applicable, the 'do no significant harm' principle as set out in Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(6)</sup> (the 'Taxonomy Regulation'). The Next Generation EU Recovery Plan offers an important opportunity to accelerate the pace of transition towards climate neutrality and the protection of the environment.

<sup>(5)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law') (OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1).

<sup>(6)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088 (OJ L 198, 22.6.2020, p. 13).

- (8) The 7th EAP expired on 31 December 2020 and Article 4(3) thereof required the Commission, if appropriate, to present a proposal for an Eighth Environment Action Programme ('8th EAP') in a timely manner with a view to avoiding a gap between the 7th and the 8th EAP. In its communication on the European Green Deal, the Commission announced that the 8th EAP would include a new monitoring mechanism to ensure that the Union remains on track to meet its environmental objectives.
- (9) In accordance with Article 192(3) TFEU, the 8th EAP sets priority objectives to be attained. The measures necessary for the implementation of the 8th EAP are to be adopted under Article 192(1) or (2) TFEU.
- (10) The measures which implement the 8th EAP, such as initiatives, programmes, investments, projects and agreements, should take into consideration the 'do no significant harm' principle laid down in Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.
- (11) The 8th EAP should support the objectives of the European Green Deal in line with the long-term objective to live well, within the planetary boundaries by 2050 at the latest, in line with what has been already established in the 7th EAP. The 8<sup>th</sup> EAP, as the overall Union Environment Action Programme running until 2030, goes beyond the European Green Deal. The priority objectives of the 8th EAP set out a direction for Union policymaking, building on, but not limited to, the commitments of the strategies and initiatives of the European Green Deal, such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the new Circular Economy Action Plan, the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability and the Zero Pollution Action Plan.
- (12) The Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change <sup>(7)</sup> (the 'Paris Agreement') aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, including by holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1,5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.
- (13) The 8th EAP forms the basis for attaining the environment and climate-related objectives defined under the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, and should be aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement, the Rio Conventions and other relevant international agreements. The 8th EAP enables a systemic change to a Union economy that ensures well-being within planetary boundaries where growth is regenerative and should also ensure that the green transition is achieved in a just and inclusive way, whilst contributing to reducing inequalities. According to a model developed by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, the achievement of the environmental- and climate-related SDGs underpins the social and economic SDGs because our societies and economies depend on a healthy biosphere and because sustainable development can only take place within the safe operating space of a stable and resilient planet. Achievement of the SDGs by the Union and its support for third countries to do the same will be essential if the Union is to demonstrate global leadership in achieving sustainability transitions.
- (14) Action to achieve the Union's environmental and climate objectives needs to be carried out in line with the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- (15) Pursuant to Article 191(2) TFEU, Union policy on the environment is to aim at a high level of protection, taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Union, and is to be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should, as a priority, be rectified at source, and that the polluter should pay.
- (16) The 8th EAP should accelerate the green transition, in a just and inclusive way, to a climate-neutral, sustainable, non-toxic, resource-efficient, renewable energy-based, resilient and competitive circular economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes. The green transition should take place in the context of a well-being economy where growth is regenerative and which enables systemic change, which recognises that the well-being and prosperity of our societies depend on a stable climate, a healthy environment and thriving ecosystems and which provides a safe operating space within planetary boundaries. As the global population and the demand for natural resources continue to grow, economic activity should develop in a sustainable way that does no harm but, on the contrary,

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(7) OJ L 282, 19.10.2016, p. 4.

reverses climate change, protects, restores and improves the state of the environment, including by halting and reversing biodiversity loss, prevents environmental degradation, protects health and well-being from negative environmental risks and impacts, prevents and minimises pollution, and results in the maintenance and enrichment of natural capital and the promotion of a sustainable bioeconomy, therefore ensuring an abundance of renewable and non-renewable resources. Through continuous research and innovation, transformation of production and consumption patterns, and adaptation to new challenges and co-creation, the well-being economy strengthens resilience and protects the well-being of present and future generations.

- (17) The 8th EAP should set out thematic priority objectives in areas of climate change mitigation, adaptation to climate change, protecting and restoring terrestrial and marine biodiversity, a non-toxic circular economy, a zero pollution environment and minimising environmental pressures from production and consumption across all sectors of the economy. Those thematic priority objectives, which address both drivers and impacts of environmental damage, are inherently interlinked. A systemic approach is therefore necessary for their attainment. The 8th EAP should furthermore identify the enabling conditions to achieve, in a coherent way, the long-term and the thematic priority objectives for all actors involved.
- (18) Impact assessments undertaken in the context of the 8th EAP should take into account the full range of immediate and long-term impacts on the environment and climate as part of an integrated analysis of economic, social and environmental impacts, including their cumulative effects, as well as the costs of action and inaction. Those impact assessments should be based on wide and transparent consultation. Within 8 weeks of closure of a public consultation, the Commission should present detailed feedback on stakeholder consultation responses, distinguishing between contributions from different types of stakeholders.
- (19) The transition to a well-being economy, where growth is regenerative, is embedded in the 8th EAP and enshrined in both the 2030 and 2050 priority objectives. To ensure that transition, it will be necessary for the Union to develop a more holistic approach to policymaking through, inter alia, the use of a summary dashboard that measures economic, social and environmental progress 'beyond GDP'. A summary indicator set, as part of the Union's efforts to implement the UN 2030 Agenda, would summarise the existing indicator and monitoring processes, whilst also providing information on distance to target, where possible, and ultimately serving as a political summary to guide policy-making. The development of such an indicator set is therefore included as an enabling condition in the 8th EAP.
- (20) The UN Environment Programme and the OECD Global Forum on Environment have highlighted that environmental changes have gender-specific impact. Gender-differentiated roles also cause differentiated vulnerabilities of women and men to the effects of climate change, and climate change impacts exacerbate gender inequalities. Therefore, a gender perspective on actions and goals related to the attainment of the priority objectives of the 8th EAP is necessary in order to help ensure that gender inequalities are not perpetuated.
- (21) Article 35 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(8)</sup> states that the State of the Energy Union report is to include an element on Member States' progress towards phasing out energy subsidies, in particular for fossil fuels. Article 17 of that Regulation provides that the Commission, assisted by the Energy Union Committee, is to adopt implementing acts, including a methodology for the reporting on the phasing out of energy subsidies, in particular for fossil fuels. In addition, based on the results of an ongoing study the Commission will support Member States in the phase out of other environmentally harmful subsidies.

<sup>(8)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, amending Regulations (EC) No 663/2009 and (EC) No 715/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 94/22/EC, 98/70/EC, 2009/31/EC, 2009/73/EC, 2010/31/EU, 2012/27/EU and 2013/30/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directives 2009/119/EC and (EU) 2015/652 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 525/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 328, 21.12.2018, p. 1).

- (22) To meet the needs of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, including investment priorities for Natura 2000 and green infrastructure, the Commission has assessed that at least EUR 20 000 000 000 a year should be unlocked for spending on nature. This will require mobilising private and public funding at national and Union level, including through a range of different programmes.
- (23) In line with the Commission communication of 14 October 2020 entitled 'Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability Towards a Toxic-Free Environment', the 8th EAP should support the Union's efforts to promote the sound management of chemicals through international cooperation and partnerships, in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora as well as in cooperation with third countries. The Union will, in line with international commitments, ensure that hazardous chemicals banned in the Union are not produced for export, including by amending relevant legislation if and as needed.
- (24) Both in the Union and globally, land and soil continue to be degraded by a wide range of human activities, such as poor land management, land-use change, unsustainable agricultural practices, land abandonment, pollution, unsustainable forestry practices and soil sealing, and due to biodiversity loss and climate change, often combined with other factors, thus reducing the capacity of land and soil to provide ecosystem services and functions.
- (25) The global food system, including agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, remains one of the key drivers of climate change and environmental degradation, including global deforestation. In the Union, the transformation of the Union food system is needed in order to ensure the attainment of the priority objectives of the 8th EAP.
- (26) According to the Workshop report on Biodiversity and Pandemics of 29 October 2020 issued by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the underlying causes of pandemics are the same global environmental changes that drive biodiversity loss and climate change, including land-use change, agricultural expansion and intensification, and wildlife trade and consumption, and other drivers. Climate change has been implicated in disease emergence and will likely cause substantial future pandemic risk, whilst biodiversity loss is also associated with the transformation of landscapes and can lead to increased emerging disease risk in some cases. According to the report, the cost of inaction vastly outweighs the cost of implementing global strategies to prevent pandemics based on reducing wildlife trade and land-use change and on increasing One Health surveillance.
- (27) The COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to an unprecedented global health and economic crisis, has demonstrated again the importance of applying the multi-sectoral One Health approach in policy-making, which recognises that human health depends on the state of the environment and is connected to its components and factors, including animal health, and that actions to tackle threats to health have to take into account a complexity of health and environmental interrelations. The 8th EAP should contribute to the full integration of the One Health approach across all levels of policy-making.
- (28) Progressing towards the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as laid out in Resolution 48/13 of the United Nations Human Rights Council, is an enabling condition for attaining the priority objectives of the 8th EAP.
- (29) The term 'ecosystem approach', which has been established under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way in order to help reach a balance between the three objectives of that Convention, namely, conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing of biological diversity.
- (30) According to the EEA report 'Nature-based solutions in Europe: Policy, knowledge and practice for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction', nature-based solutions (NBS) for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are actions which work with and enhance nature to restore and protect ecosystems and to help society to adapt to the impacts of climate change and slow further warming, while providing multiple additional benefits. The implementation of NBS should be coherent with the 8th EAP's priority objectives.

- (31) Natural capital accounting, a tool that aims to measure the changes in the stock of natural capital at a variety of scales and to integrate the value of ecosystem services into accounting and reporting systems, should support measuring progress towards ambitious targets and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect and restore biodiversity, which it cannot replace.
- (32) Marine and coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, coral reefs, salt marshes and seagrass meadows, are being degraded and negatively impacted through harmful practices, pollution and processes such as eutrophication and acidification, impacting the biodiversity they sustain and the ecosystem services and functions they provide, as well as their capacity to act as carbon sinks. Urgent action is required to protect and restore marine and coastal ecosystems, including the ocean floor. Ocean protection and preservation is a global challenge and a collective responsibility, and there is a need to raise awareness and improve ocean literacy in order to foster the adoption and implementation of effective measures by all levels of, and actors in, society.
- (33) Environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change are expected to increase further in the years to come, impacting the hardest on developing countries and vulnerable populations. In order to help build resilience and support third countries in their efforts to mitigate, and adapt to, climate change, as well as to protect biodiversity, financial assistance from the Union and Member States to third countries should promote the UN 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the post-2020 global framework of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and be in line with the priority objectives of the 8th EAP. Furthermore, the Union and Member States should also ensure that the Paris Agreement and other international climate and environmental agreements are implemented in ways that reflect the principles of equity and of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as laid down in Article 2(2) of the Paris Agreement.
- (34) Green diplomacy and enhanced cooperation with third countries, including developing countries, and supporting good global environmental governance, including promotion of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, are key to attaining SDGs as well as the Union's environmental and climate objectives. Ensuring synergies and coherence between all internal and external Union policies, including trade policies and agreements, and adhering to Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development is also essential.
- (35) As environment policy is highly decentralised, action to attain the priority objectives of the 8th EAP should be taken at different levels of governance, i.e. at Union, national, regional and local levels, with a collaborative approach to multi-level governance. Efficient monitoring, implementation, enforcement and accountability are essential, and effective governance is required in order to ensure coherence between policies. The integrated approach to policy development and implementation should be strengthened with a view to maximising the synergies between environmental, social and economic objectives by systematically screening and, where appropriate, assessing the potential trade-offs between them, as well as by systematically evaluating the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups. This integrated approach should meet the specific needs of all regions, including urban and rural areas and outermost regions. Moreover, access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice, including transparent engagement with and between public authorities at all levels of decision-making, non-governmental actors and the broader public, in line with the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters <sup>(9)</sup> (the 'Aarhus Convention'), are important for ensuring the success of the 8th EAP.
- (36) The Commission should assess the progress in attaining the priority objectives of the 8th EAP by the Union and the Member States in the context of the just and inclusive transition towards sustainability, well-being and resilience within planetary boundaries. This is in line with calls of Heads of State or Government of the Member States in the Porto declaration, of the Council in its conclusions of 24 October 2019 on the Economy of Wellbeing and of the European Economic and Social Committee in its Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' for measuring economic performance and societal progress 'beyond GDP', and moving towards using well-being as a compass for policy, which is also supported by the OECD.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ L 124, 17.5.2005, p. 4.

- (37) The assessment of progress towards the attainment of the priority objectives of the 8th EAP should reflect latest developments as regards the availability and relevance of data and indicators. It should be coherent with, and without prejudice to, monitoring and governance tools covering more specific aspects of environment and climate policy, such as, in particular, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999, the Environmental Implementation Review, announced by the Commission in its communication of 27 May 2016 entitled 'Delivering the benefits of EU environmental policies through a regular Environmental Implementation Review', and monitoring tools relating to a circular economy, zero pollution, biodiversity, air, water, soil, waste, or any other environment policies. Together with tools used under the European Semester, Eurostat's SDG Monitoring and the Commission communication of 9 September 2020 entitled the '2020 Strategic Foresight Report', assessment of progress towards attaining the priority objectives of the 8th EAP should form part of a cross-cutting, coherent and interconnected set of monitoring and governance tools, covering not only environmental but also social and economic factors.
- (38) Further developing the knowledge base on planetary boundaries and environmental footprints, and developing relevant indicator sets, are important in view of the 8th EAP's priority objectives, in particular its long-term priority objective.
- (39) Robust and meaningful data and indicators are needed in order to monitor progress towards attaining the priority objectives of the 8th EAP. The Commission, the EEA and other relevant agencies should access, re-use and build on the data and indicators provided by the Member States in accordance with applicable Union legal acts. In addition, other data sources, such as satellite data and processed information taken from the Union's Earth Observation Programme (Copernicus), the European Forest Fire Information System, the Biodiversity Information System for Europe, the Land Parcel Identification System and the European Flood Awareness System, and data platforms such as the European Marine Observation and Data Network and the Information Platform for Chemical Monitoring should be utilised. The application of modern digital tools and artificial intelligence allows the data to be managed and analysed in an effective way and thereby reduces the administrative burden, whilst increasing timeliness and quality. To assess progress towards attaining the priority objectives of the 8th EAP, non-legally binding targets could be used in addition to legally binding targets set out in Union law.
- (40) Furthermore, in accordance with the requirements set out in Directives 2003/4/EC<sup>(10)</sup>, 2007/2/EC<sup>(11)</sup> and (EU) 2019/1024<sup>(12)</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council, Member States should ensure that the relevant data, information and indicators for monitoring the implementation of the 8th EAP are freely available, non-discriminatory, with open access, adequate, of high quality, comparable, up-to-date, user friendly and easily accessible online.
- (41) To attain the priority objectives of the 8th EAP, the EEA and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), as well as Member States, should be equipped with adequate capacity and sufficient resources to ensure a sound, accessible and transparent knowledge and evidence base to support the implementation of the strategic priorities of the European Green Deal and the assessment of progress under the 8th EAP. Where relevant, other bodies and agencies should also be involved and contribute to the implementation of those strategic priorities and to that assessment of progress.
- (42) Article 192(3), first subparagraph, TFEU provides that it is for the European Parliament and the Council, in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, to adopt general action programmes setting out priority objectives to be attained in the field of Union policy on the environment. As the Commission Communication on the European Green Deal contains a roadmap of key actions relevant for the field of environment and climate in the coming years, exceptionally this Decision does not define actions for the attainment of its priority objectives for the period up to 2025. However, there will be a need to do so for the period after the European Green Deal's key actions are expected to have been put in place by 2024, to ensure that the thematic priority objectives set out in this Decision can be attained and that the 8th EAP continues to set the overarching vision of the Union's environment

<sup>(10)</sup> Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC (OJ L 41, 14.2.2003, p. 26).

<sup>(11)</sup> Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (OJ L 108, 25.4.2007, p. 1).

<sup>(12)</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information (OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 56).

policy. This is also necessary in order to respect the prerogatives of the European Parliament and the Council pursuant to Article 192(3), first subparagraph, TFEU, without prejudice to the prerogatives of the Commission pursuant to Article 17 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). For that purpose, there should be a mid-term review carried out by the Commission by 31 March 2024, followed, where appropriate, in order to attain the thematic priority objectives, by 31 March 2025, by a legislative proposal adding an annex to this Decision.

- (43) In order to take account of evolving policy objectives and the progress made, the 8th EAP should be evaluated by the Commission in 2029. The Commission should present a report to the European Parliament and to the Council containing the findings of that evaluation, followed, if appropriate, by a legislative proposal for the next environmental action programme. Such a legislative proposal should be presented in a timely manner, with a view to avoiding a gap between the 8th and the 9th EAP.
- (44) Since the objectives of this Decision cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States but can rather, by reason of the scale and effects of the proposed action programme, be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 TEU. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Decision does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve those objectives,

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

#### *Article 1*

#### **Subject matter**

1. This Decision sets out a general action programme in the field of the environment for the period up to 31 December 2030 (the '8th Environment Action programme' or '8th EAP'). It lays down the priority objectives of the 8th EAP and identifies the enabling conditions necessary to attain those priority objectives. It establishes a monitoring framework to measure the progress of the Union and its Member States towards the attainment of the priority objectives of the 8th EAP and a governance mechanism to ensure attainment of those priority objectives.
2. The 8th EAP aims to accelerate the green transition to a climate-neutral, sustainable, non-toxic, resource-efficient, renewable energy-based, resilient and competitive circular economy in a just, equitable and inclusive way, and to protect, restore and improve the state of the environment by, inter alia, halting and reversing biodiversity loss. It supports and strengthens an integrated policy and implementation approach, building upon the European Green Deal.
3. The 8th EAP forms the basis for achieving the environmental and climate objectives defined under the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs as well as for those pursued by multilateral environmental and climate agreements.
4. The monitoring framework of the 8th EAP shall contribute to the Union's efforts to measure progress towards sustainability, well-being and resilience.
5. The 8th EAP shall be based on the precautionary principle, the principles of preventive action and of rectification of pollution at source and the polluter pays principle.

#### *Article 2*

#### **Priority objectives**

1. The 8th EAP shall have the long-term priority objective that by 2050 at the latest, people live well, within the planetary boundaries in a well-being economy where nothing is wasted, growth is regenerative, climate neutrality in the Union has been achieved and inequalities have been significantly reduced. A healthy environment underpins the well-being

of all people and is an environment in which biodiversity is conserved, ecosystems thrive, and nature is protected and restored, leading to increased resilience to climate change, weather- and climate-related disasters and other environmental risks. The Union sets the pace for ensuring the prosperity of present and future generations globally, guided by intergenerational responsibility.

2. The 8th EAP shall have the following six interlinked thematic priority objectives for the period up to 31 December 2030:

- (a) swift and predictable reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, enhancement of removals by natural sinks in the Union to attain the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target as laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/1119, in line with the Union's climate and environment objectives, whilst ensuring a just transition that leaves no one behind;
- (b) continuous progress in enhancing and mainstreaming adaptive capacity, including on the basis of ecosystem approaches, strengthening resilience and adaptation and reducing the vulnerability of the environment, society and all sectors of the economy to climate change, while improving prevention of, and preparedness for, weather- and climate-related disasters;
- (c) advancing towards a well-being economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes and accelerating the transition to a non-toxic circular economy, where growth is regenerative, resources are used efficiently and sustainably, and the waste hierarchy is applied;
- (d) pursuing zero pollution, including in relation to harmful chemicals, in order to achieve a toxic-free environment, including for air, water and soil, as well as in relation to light and noise pollution, and protecting the health and well-being of people, animals and ecosystems from environment-related risks and negative impacts;
- (e) protecting, preserving and restoring marine and terrestrial biodiversity and the biodiversity of inland waters inside and outside protected areas by, inter alia, halting and reversing biodiversity loss and improving the state of ecosystems and their functions and the services they provide, and by improving the state of the environment, in particular air, water and soil, as well as by combating desertification and soil degradation;
- (f) promoting environmental aspects of sustainability and significantly reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to the Union's production and consumption, in particular in the areas of energy, industry, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and the food system.

### *Article 3*

#### **Enabling conditions to attain the priority objectives**

The attainment of the priority objectives set out in Article 2 shall require the following from the Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities and stakeholders, as appropriate:

- (a) ensuring effective, swift and full implementation of Union legislation and strategies on the environment and the climate and striving for excellence in environmental performance at Union, national, regional and local levels, including by providing sufficient administrative and compliance assurance capacity, as laid out in the regular Environmental Implementation Review, supporting and cooperating with networks of practitioners, such as the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law, the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment, the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment and the European Network for Environmental Crime;
- (b) prioritising enforcement of Union environmental law where implementation is lacking, including through infringement proceedings, as well as by ensuring that sufficient financial and human resources are allocated for that purpose and that information on those proceedings is complete and easily accessible, while respecting Union law;

- (c) improving guidance and recommendations, including on effective, dissuasive and proportionate penalties to reduce risks of non-compliance with Union environmental law, as well as stepping up action in the area of environmental liability and responses to non-compliance, and strengthening judicial cooperation in the area of, and law enforcement against, environmental crime as laid down in relevant Union legislation, such as Directive 2008/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council <sup>(13)</sup>;
- (d) strengthening the integrated approach to policy development and implementation, in particular by:
- (i) mainstreaming the priority objectives set out in Article 2, as well as, where relevant, the SDGs, in all relevant strategies, legislative and non-legislative initiatives, programmes, investments and projects at Union, national, regional and local levels, as well as in relevant international agreements concluded by the Union after 2 May 2022, in order to ensure that those strategies, legislative and non-legislative initiatives, programmes, investments, projects and international agreements and their implementation are consistent with, contribute where relevant, and do no harm to any of the priority objectives set out in Article 2;
  - (ii) maximising the benefits from implementing the Directives 2011/92/EU <sup>(14)</sup> and 2001/42/EC <sup>(15)</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council;
  - (iii) systematically screening and, where appropriate, assessing synergies and potential trade-offs between environmental, social and economic objectives for all initiatives, so as to ensure that people's well-being, and in particular their need for a healthy environment, clean air and affordable, accessible and high-quality food, water, energy, housing, green infrastructure and mobility are met in a sustainable way that leaves no one behind;
  - (iv) adopting a 'Think Sustainability First' approach, including by integrating, where relevant, the SDGs in the 'better regulation' guidelines and the 'better regulation' toolbox, as well as streamlining and operationalising the 'do no harm' principle;
  - (v) regularly evaluating existing policies and, where appropriate, proposing new legislation, based on, where relevant, impact assessments that build upon wide and transparent consultations – following procedures that are accountable, inclusive, informed and simple to implement – and that take into account the full range of immediate and long-term impacts on the environment and climate as part of an integrated analysis of economic, social and environmental impacts, including their cumulative effects, as well as the costs of action and inaction;
  - (vi) presenting, within 8 weeks of closure of a public consultation by the Commission, detailed feedback on stakeholder consultation responses, distinguishing between contributions from different types of stakeholders;
- (e) developing a summary dashboard and indicator set measuring 'beyond GDP', based on, inter alia, a targeted consultation with all relevant stakeholders as well as a report which identifies the interlinkages between existing indicator sets, monitoring frameworks and processes at Union level measuring social, economic and environmental progress and which proposes action on how existing dashboards and indicator sets can be streamlined;
- (f) ensuring that social inequalities resulting from climate- and environmental-related impacts and policies are minimised and that measures taken to protect the environment and climate are carried out in a socially fair and inclusive way;
- (g) gender mainstreaming throughout climate and environmental policies, including by incorporating a gender perspective at all stages of the policy-making process;

<sup>(13)</sup> Directive 2008/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on the protection of the environment through criminal law (OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 28).

<sup>(14)</sup> Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1).

<sup>(15)</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30).

- (h) strengthening environmentally positive incentives as well as phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies, in particular fossil fuel subsidies, at Union, national, regional and local level, without delay, inter alia, by:
  - (i) a binding Union framework to monitor and report on Member States' progress towards phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, based on an agreed methodology;
  - (ii) setting a deadline for the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies consistent with the ambition of limiting global warming to 1,5 °C;
  - (iii) a methodology that is set out by the Commission, in consultation with Member States, by 2023, to identify other environmentally harmful subsidies; on the basis of that methodology Member States shall identify other environmentally harmful subsidies and report them regularly to the Commission, allowing for a Commission report on the level and type of such subsidies in the Union, and on progress made on phasing them out;
- (i) mainstreaming biodiversity action in the Union's policies and contributing to the achievement of the overall ambition of providing 7,5 % of annual spending under the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 to biodiversity objectives in 2024 and 10 % of that annual spending in 2026 and in 2027, with such spending to be tracked using an effective, transparent and comprehensive methodology, while considering the existing overlaps between climate and biodiversity goals;
- (j) ensuring effective climate and biodiversity mainstreaming and proofing of the Union budget as well as consistency between climate and biodiversity funding;
- (k) promoting the sound management of chemicals at international level, whilst also promoting the global phase-down of substances which are not authorised in the Union;
- (l) swiftly substituting substances of concern, including substances of very high concern, endocrine disruptors, very persistent chemicals, neurotoxicants and immuno-toxicants, as well as tackling the combination effects of chemicals, nano-forms of substances and exposure to hazardous chemicals from products, assessing their impacts on health and the environment, including climate, and biodiversity, whilst promoting safe and sustainable by-design chemicals and materials and stepping up and coordinating efforts to promote the development and validation of alternatives to animal testing;
- (m) addressing land degradation and ensuring the protection and sustainable use of soil, including by way of a dedicated legislative proposal on soil health by 2023;
- (n) transforming the Union's food system, so that, inter alia, it contributes to protecting and restoring biodiversity within and outside the Union and ensures a high level of animal welfare, whilst ensuring a just transition for affected stakeholders;
- (o) holistically recognising the interconnections between human health, animal health and the environment through integration of the One Health approach in policy making;
- (p) advancing towards the recognition of a right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment internationally;
- (q) making full use of ecosystem approaches and green infrastructure, including biodiversity-friendly nature based solutions, whilst also ensuring that their implementation restores biodiversity and enhances ecosystem integrity and connectivity, has clear societal co-benefits, requiring full engagement with, and consent of, indigenous peoples and local communities, and does not replace or undermine measures taken to protect biodiversity or reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the Union;
- (r) making use of existing tools and methodologies as well as further improving monitoring methods, evaluation tools and measurable indicators for nature-based solutions;
- (s) significantly decreasing the Union's material and consumption footprints to bring them into planetary boundaries as soon as possible, including through the introduction of Union 2030 reduction targets, as appropriate;

- (t) effectively integrating the SDGs as well as climate and environmental objectives in the European Semester of economic governance, without prejudice to its original purpose, including in the National Reform Programmes and national recovery and resilience plans;
- (u) mobilising resources and ensuring sufficient sustainable investments from public and private sources, including of funds and instruments available under the Union budget, via the European Investment Bank and at national level, consistent with the Union's sustainable finance policy agenda;
- (v) making the best use of environmental taxation, market-based instruments and green budgeting and financing tools, including those required to ensure a socially fair transition, and supporting businesses and other stakeholders in developing and applying standardised natural capital accounting practices;
- (w) ensuring that environment policies and action at Union, national, regional and local level are based on the best available scientific knowledge and technologies, and strengthening the environmental knowledge base, including indigenous and local knowledge, and its uptake, including through research, innovation, fostering green skills, training and retraining, and further building up environmental and ecosystem accounting;
- (x) developing and consolidating the knowledge base, inter alia, on the requirements for systemic change, how to shift from a silo- and sector-based policy focus to a systemic approach to policy coherence, as well as the capacity of different ecosystems to act as greenhouse gas sinks and stocks;
- (y) harnessing the potential of digital and data technologies to support environment policy, including by delivering real-time data where possible and information on the state of ecosystems, while increasing efforts to minimise the environmental footprint of these technologies, and ensuring transparency, authenticity, interoperability and public accessibility of the data and information;
- (z) closing gaps in, and optimising, relevant indicator sets, such as those relating to systemic change, planetary boundaries and the Union's production and consumption footprints, as well as those that address the interface between environmental and socioeconomic factors, such as inequalities arising from environmental change, whilst ensuring that indicator sets are comparable at all levels of policy-making;
- (aa) mobilising broad support by civil society, working with businesses, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, social partners, citizens, communities and other stakeholders;
- (ab) raising awareness about the importance of achieving the priority objectives set out in Article 2, as well as strengthening the capacity of citizens to act through promoting, inter alia, debate and communication at all levels, lifelong environmental education, civic involvement and community-led action;
- (ac) contributing to supporting civil society, public authorities, citizens and communities, social partners and the private sector in identifying climate and environmental risks, in assessing their impact and in taking action to prevent, mitigate and adapt to, such risks, as well as fostering their engagement in closing knowledge gaps by, inter alia, encouraging citizen observation and reporting of environmental issues and compliance gaps, including promotion of good practices of citizen science using digital technologies;
- (ad) encouraging cooperation in the development and implementation of strategies, policies or legislation related to the 8th EAP and ensuring the full participation of regional and local authorities in urban and rural areas, including in outermost regions, across all dimensions of environmental policy-making through a collaborative and multi-level approach and ensuring that regional and local communities have adequate resources for implementation on the ground;
- (ae) strengthening cooperation between all Union institutions on climate and environment policy, including between the Commission and the Committee of the Regions in the framework of their enhanced cooperation, and exploring how to improve dialogue and information pooling;
- (af) effectively applying high standards of transparency, public participation and access to justice in accordance with the Aarhus Convention both at Union and Member State level;

- (ag) making the data and evidence linked to the implementation of the 8th EAP publicly available, easily accessible and comprehensible, without prejudice to provisions on confidentiality in domain-specific legislation;
- (ah) supporting the global uptake of the priority objectives set out in Article 2, ensuring coherence between internal and external approaches and coordinated action, in particular as regards:
  - (i) engaging with third countries on climate and environmental action, encouraging and supporting them to adopt and implement rules in those areas that are at least as ambitious as those of the Union, and ensuring that all products placed on the Union market fully comply with relevant Union requirements in line with the Union's international commitments, including with regard to halting deforestation and land degradation;
  - (ii) fostering sustainable corporate governance, including establishing mandatory due diligence requirements at Union level, and promoting the uptake of responsible business conduct in Union external policies, including in trade policy;
  - (iii) enhancing cooperation with governments, businesses, social partners and civil society in third countries and international organisations to form partnerships and alliances for environment and climate protection, and promoting cooperation on environment and climate change, including in G7 and G20;
  - (iv) demonstrating leadership in international fora by, inter alia, achievement of the SDGs by the Union as well as of the objectives laid down in the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and other multilateral environmental agreements, notably by strengthening their implementation, and supporting third countries to do the same, including by increasing transparency and accountability as regards progress on the commitments made under those agreements;
  - (v) strengthening international environmental governance by closing remaining gaps and strengthening respect for, and application of, recognised international environmental principles;
  - (vi) ensuring that the Union and the Member States' financial assistance to third countries promotes the UN 2030 Agenda.

#### Article 4

### Monitoring framework and governance

1. The Commission, supported by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), without prejudice to their independence, shall monitor, assess and report on the progress of the Union and the Member States with regard to attaining the priority objectives set out in Article 2, on an annual basis, taking into consideration the enabling conditions laid down in Article 3 and the overall goal of achieving systemic change. The information that results from that monitoring, assessment and reporting shall be made publicly available and easily accessible.

2. The monitoring, assessment and reporting referred to in paragraph 1 shall aim to facilitate high-level strategic political communication. Following a consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, the Commission shall, by 2 May 2022, present a monitoring framework, based on a limited number of headline indicators, which include, where available, systemic indicators that address, inter alia, environmental-social and environmental-economic nexus. The list of headline indicators shall remain stable to ensure accountability. It shall, however, be updated to reflect the latest policy and indicator developments, where appropriate.

3. The monitoring and assessment referred to in paragraph 1 shall reflect the latest developments as regards the availability and relevance of data and indicators and shall build on data available in the Member States and at the Union level, in particular data and indicators produced by the EEA and the European Statistical System, with a view to minimising administrative burden. It shall be coherent with, and without prejudice to, other monitoring, reporting and governance frameworks and exercises covering environment and climate policy. It shall be based on a methodology that enables, where possible, measurement of distance to targets in relation to the priority objectives set out in Article 2 and selected headline indicators.

4. The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall take account of, and exchange views annually on, the assessment referred to in paragraph 1 as well as actions taken and possible future actions.
5. The EEA and the ECHA shall support the Commission to improve the availability and relevance of data, indicators and knowledge, in particular by carrying out the following:
- (a) gathering, processing and reporting data and evidence with modern digital tools, whilst improving methodologies for data collection and treatment and for developing harmonised indicators;
  - (b) strengthening and providing support to basic research, mapping and monitoring;
  - (c) working towards closing the relevant monitoring data gaps, together with Member States and taking into account the need for systemic change;
  - (d) delivering policy-relevant and systemic analyses, and contributing to implementing policy objectives at Union and national level, including by proposing recommendations to enhance the progress to attain the objectives;
  - (e) integrating data on environmental, health, social and economic impacts, and exploiting fully other available data and services, such as those delivered by Copernicus;
  - (f) contributing to closing critical knowledge gaps on ecological tipping points, while taking into account geographical and ecological differences across regions;
  - (g) developing quantitative and qualitative tools, including foresight and models, which could provide, inter alia, information on potential future system-wide impacts of policies related to environment and climate and on 'distance to targets';
  - (h) further improving availability and interoperability of, and access to, data through Union programmes;
  - (i) ensuring transparency and accountability.
6. The Commission shall regularly examine data and knowledge needs at Union and national level, including the capacity of the EEA and the ECHA as well as of other European bodies and agencies, where relevant, to carry out the tasks referred to in paragraph 5.

#### *Article 5*

#### **Mid-term review**

1. By 31 March 2024, the Commission shall carry out a mid-term review of the progress achieved in attaining the thematic priority objectives set out in Article 2(2), taking into consideration the status of the enabling conditions laid down in Article 3, and the progress made towards monitoring and assessing systemic change. The Commission shall propose, where appropriate, changes to the headline indicators referred to in Article 4(2) in light of the outcome of the mid-term review. The mid-term review shall be based on the assessments carried out pursuant to Article 4(1) and on any other relevant findings. The Commission shall submit a report on the mid-term review to the European Parliament and to the Council.
2. In light of the mid-term review referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, of the possible responses of the European Parliament and the Council to that review, of other relevant policy developments and of the latest report from the European Environment Agency on the state and outlook of the European environment, in order to attain the thematic priority objectives set out in Article 2(2), the Commission shall present, where appropriate, a legislative proposal to add an annex to the 8th EAP, for the period after 2025, containing a list of actions with a view to reaching those objectives, as well as a timeline for the respective actions.

#### *Article 6*

#### **Evaluation**

By 31 March 2029, the Commission shall carry out an evaluation of the 8th EAP. The Commission shall submit a report containing the main findings of that evaluation to the European Parliament and to the Council, followed, if appropriate, by a legislative proposal for the next environmental action programme by 31 December 2029.

*Article 7***Entry into force**

This Decision shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Strasbourg, 6 April 2022.

*For the European Parliament*  
*The President*  
R. METSOLA

*For the Council*  
*The President*  
C. BEAUNE

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