

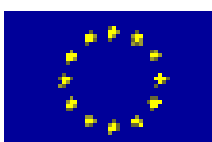


Global Assessment of the Fifth Action Programme on the Environment and sustainable development

Lola Manteiga



SERIE TECNICA 0



Global Assessment of the Fifth Action Programme on the Environment and sustainable development

This document is the answer to Mr. James Currie (European Commission DGXI/1) in relation to the assessment of the 5EAP (November 1998).

We expressed our concern about the requirement of providing the responses just in English or French. Spanish is also a language of the European Union.

Autor

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Commission question

1. Do you agree with the objectives which were selected for your area/sector? Are they still valid? Has the 5EAP been directly influential on strategies and actions in your area/sector?

Although there are some topics that they were not identified as objectives of the 5EAP that we think they should be included as a priority (soil related topics), the selected objectives are still valid. Nevertheless new environmental concerns require new objectives for the next programme:

- New objectives for: eutrophication, soil erosion, desertification, photoquimic pollution
- New sectors: fisheries

As a general principle¹, the Spanish environmental policy is mainly focused to give an answer to regulatory requirements and there is not an specific environmental strategy. This could be the answer to the poor achievement of environmental objectives.

In general, the 5EAP has not influence much the environmental actions. In fact, most environmental consulting and engineering do not know the content of the Programme and never refer to it on documents or studies. This scarce consideration of the general principles of the 5EAP are also evident at the administrative level. For instance, it is not mentioned at the present Community Support Framework of the Structural Funds, with has funded many actions that could have promoted the 5EAP from different sectors. In this sense it is much more known the Agenda 21.

The main reasons for this have been:

- Poor awareness. The 5EAP has not been well disseminated, not between general public nor between medium term environmental policy makers.
- Lack of integration. The 5EAP requirement and instruments for environmental policy integration are not enough developed.
- Lack of information. There is not enough environmental quality information for the policy process.
- Lack preparation. The environmental authorities need environmental training.
- Poor participation. Economic and social sectors do not participate enough on the design of policy actions.

¹ For understanding how Spain works in the field of the environment, you should bear on mind that is a de-centralised country, with 17 regions responsible of most of the environmental topics in their territories. The General Administration implements to the national law the EU legislation, and afterwards the regions have to implement it. In this process there is a strong need of co-ordination and integration. Finally, there are some regions more concern on environmental topics than others.

- Lack of environmental education. Environmental education does not have a regulatory or/and strategic framework regarding content and quality.

Commission question

2. Have the actions described in the 5EAP been implemented? If not, what were the obstacles? Try to quantify, when possible.

To obtain quantified data, please see the references gave before.

Water:

The information offered by the National Environmental Indicator System reflect an unfavourable tendency. The 5EAP objectives regarding to a good knowledge of water quality and quantity situation has not been raised, specially in relation with underground water. Actions aiming to achieve water saving and sustainable use improvement have not been developed properly at all.

- Underground water pollution by nitrates has increased and the salinisation of coastal aquifers has also increased.
- The population served by waste water treatment has increased.
- The number of monitoring stations with good quality regarding the "General Water Quality Index (GWQI)" has decreased as well as the stations with very bad conditions.

Waste water management according to the requirements of the EU Directives, is improving just for big cities. Due that, monitoring stations with "good quality" (QWQI) has also decreased. This is a clear example of how actions answer to regulatory requirements but not to a water quality strategy.

- The eutrophication of water in reservoirs has increased. More than 31% of this volume is nowadays eutrophic.
- The number of water related species extinct or in danger has increased as well as the number of reintroduced species.
- The water use intensity has notably increased. At the same time, the available natural resources per inhabitant are "very low" in relation with the European context.

The obstacles to arrive 5EAP objectives in relation with quantitative issues are mainly related with economic aspects. Water does not have a right price and the costs of water services are not well internalise. In relation to water quality issues the main problem is the lack of an strategy.

Soil:

The information offered by the National Environmental Indicator System reflect a favourable tendency on the policy interested on the deterioration of the resource. The 5EAP had not identify objectives for this topic but it is expected that the next programme will include them.

- 44% of the national surface is under high risk of erosion and 63% is under risk of desertification.
- The level of soil pollution is not still well known but the knowledge has notably increased.
- Fight against forest fire is improving.
- The use of pesticides has decreased.
- The national soil surface under protection has notably increased.

Climate change - Acidification:

Tendencies reflect, in general, acceptable results regarding global and regional concerns. Anyway, The 5EAP objectives for this issues are not strong enough and measures are not well defined.

- The pH and the concentration of acid substances (SO₂ and NO₂) in rain has decreased since 1992.
- The SO₂ and NO_x emissions from movil sources has increased.
- The CO₂ emissions has increased. The main responsible is the energy processing sector and specially the transport sector.
- The CH₄ emissions has increased mainly due the waste sector.
- There is not available information on photochemical pollution, but the emissions of VOCs and N₂O point as an emergent concern.
- Transport sector is the source of major concern

International protocols and monitoring networks have been basic for the achievement of objectives. The situation is well known and control measures have been improved, mainly in the industry and energy sector. On the other hand, pressure coming from the transport sector is an increase concern, where policy measures need a more in deep analysis, not only at the national level but also at the EU level.

Actions identified in the 5EAP needs more definition. Probably timetables need to integrate economic parameters in their definitions.

The energetic sector has prove to be sensitive to this problem. However, investments are more focused to the promotion of renewable energies than to improve efficiency, which not being a sustainable approach is sold as it is, creating confusion and new environmental problems.

Waste:

5EAP objectives are not raised. Lack of information is the main concern.

- Urban and dangerous wastes per habitant has increased.
- Plastic and glass Packages consumption has increased.
- The controlled urban waste management has increased, as well as the used oil management and the elimination of PCBs and PCTs.
- The production of dangerous waste is notably increasing, while treatment capacity is not.
- Information about waste management and treatment is bad and frequently do not exist, specially in relation with dangerous wastes.

The main obstacle to achieve objectives is the lack of information. Economic sectors interested on waste find many difficulties to develop commercial channels due to that scarcity. Some relevant good examples of waste management through commercial interest have raised in some regions.

Biodiversity:

The main objectives of the 5EAP, the maintenance of biodiversity, have been partially achieved.

- Although the conservation and restoration of natural habitats has increased, the number of endangered species continues to be increasing.
- Habitat fragmentation in increasing
- Management plans for endangered species have increased
- The most important effect of the CAP agri-environmental measures have been to introduce this topic on to the agriculture authorities, contributing to a better integration between agriculture and conservation. However, its effects on biodiversity and landscape seems to be far.
- Although some regional EIA considers a future EEA, this has not been yet developed, waiting for an EU framework
- Awareness has improve.
- Damage in forests has increase. However, it is difficult to separate the percentage due to pollution from that due to the drought.

The main obstacle of not achieving the 5EAP is a lack of integration on to other policies, mainly agriculture and rural development. The objectives and instruments considered at the 5EAP do nor pursuit integration on to other policies, when it should by a priority for sustainable development, more even in the Mediterranean countries, were nature conservation is closely link to the traditional low intensity farming systems.

Commission question

3. Were the proposed actions/instruments in the 5EAP adequate to fulfil the objectives and targets? If not, why? Were suitable indicators selected? If not, why? Were the timetables appropriate to the problems to be addressed?

Part of the answer should be read above.

In Spain, the 5EAP measures related with Directives that set up "limit values" have been profitable and adequate to fulfil objectives.

Measures defined in a general framework did not work, due to:

- the lack of environmental knowledge of the authorities responsible
- the lack of integration within other policies
- the lack of environmental commitment
- the lack of efficient request from environmental NGOs.

For the future:

- Environmental integration instruments need to be developed.
- Indicators need to address regional situations and concerns more suitably, specially in relation to Mediterranean countries.
- Environmental information must to be improved
- Public awareness on environmental concerns and they right to ask for better conditions and more efficient measures need improvement.
- Environmental authorities and NGOs need training in order to arrive a fruitful policy process.
- The environmental policy should establish more clear and measurable objectives.