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TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

ON THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

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1. PREAMBLE

On 11 April 1984 the Commission undertook to define a Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of the Environment in the Mediterranean Region¹. This decision was taken out of awareness of the specific, acute problems facing this region.

On 24 April 1984 the decision of the Commission was sent to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee. It provides for a preparatory phase, at the end of which a report must be drawn up on whether or not to continue the action with adequate funds and a suitable legal basis. In its resolution of 10 May 1985 Parliament welcomed the initiative and asked the Commission to draft a document defining the scope, objectives and methods of Community action².

The Economic and Social Committee had delivered an opinion along much the same lines on 8 March 1985³.

In its work programme for 1988 the Commission renewed its commitment to propose by the end of the year a new Community instrument designed to play a vital role in the fight against pollution of the Mediterranean Sea and, hence, against degradation of the environment in the Mediterranean basin.

The aim of this communication is to define a medium- and long-term strategy and a consistent package of priority measures.

¹ OJ C 133, 21.5.1984, p. 12

² OJ C 141, 10.6.1985, p. 493

³ CES 767/84 final

2. SPECIFIC, ACUTE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

The vulnerability of the Mediterranean basin has been highlighted by many international conventions.

In the London Convention of 2 November 1973⁴ the Mediterranean is classified as a "special zone". In turn, the preamble of the Barcelona Convention of 16 February 1976 states that the contracting parties were "mindful of the special hydrographic and ecological characteristics of the Mediterranean Sea area and its particular vulnerability to pollution".

The exceptional vulnerability of the Mediterranean Sea can be attributed to the highly sensitive ecosystem which makes up the Mediterranean environment. The main reasons why the Mediterranean environment is so highly vulnerable are summed up below:

- First, the ecology of the area is particularly sensitive: the poor, sporadic water supply, the variety of fauna and flora, including many rare, endangered species, the narrow plains and plateau for farming and the nature of the forests and maquis.

Then there is the nature of the Mediterranean Sea itself: a semi-enclosed sea dotted with small islands endowed with sparse indigenous natural resources, the slow, limited water change inside the basin and between the basin and the ocean, the stratification of the water and the high temperatures.

- Second, the Mediterranean region is threatened and attacked on many fronts, with seasonal overpopulation, overexploitation and pollution all likely to increase in the future.

The overpopulation of the Mediterranean area, especially of the coastal strip, is causing increasing concern. The pressures of industrialization, construction, demography and tourism place an immense strain on the Mediterranean coast, particularly since it is so ill-equipped to withstand these pressures, which seem bound to grow. The population along the Mediterranean coast is expected to soar from 133 million today to 230 million in the next 40 years.

Overexploitation is another serious threat to the Mediterranean countries, resulting in soil erosion and deforestation. Estimates suggest that by 2025 a quarter of the Mediterranean forests are likely to have disappeared, despite the reafforestation schemes now in progress. Every year forest fires on a scale virtually unknown in Northern Europe burn 200 000 hectares or more.

⁴International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (1973/78 Marpol Convention, London, 2 November 1973).

Finally, urgent measures must be taken to combat the extinction of typical Mediterranean species of fauna or flora. The monk seal, sea turtles, tortoises, Bonelli's eagle, the peregrine falcon and the purple gallinule are just some of the species facing extinction.

Just as the Mediterranean environment is definitely under attack from all sides, it is equally clear that, unless preventive or corrective measures are taken to cater for the needs of the environment, continued pressure of this type will have all kinds of environmental, social and economic consequences:

- the region will deteriorate increasingly;
- this deterioration will in turn have an international impact, since approximately 100 million visitors and tourists, mainly from Europe, visit the region each year to enjoy the natural beauty, peace and harmony of its inimitable landscapes. In this sense the Mediterranean region belongs not only to the Mediterranean people but to all Europeans who visit the region and who play their part in placing this strain on its environment. Protection of this region is in the interest of them all, especially since the forecasts agree that the pressures will multiply by the turn of the century.

The Mediterranean region needs special attention to withstand all these pressures and threats.

If the measures are to be effective, they must take the form of an action plan and strategy fitting in with the overall programme for the region.

3. THE PREPARATORY PHASE (1986-88)

3.1. This phase was intended to point the way and reflecting the spirit and substance of the communication to the Council of 24 April 1984. Despite the deliberately limited funds, the action was geared to a series of firmly established objectives:

- to collect the information available in order to define, on as reliable a basis as possible, a strategy of Community aid and a set of concrete measures;
- to make these measures an integral part of the efforts made to solve the Mediterranean's environmental protection problems at regional, national, international and also Community level;
- to pinpoint certain problems likely to arise in the course of implementation of any such action plan;
- to gauge the effectiveness of suitable methods permitting integration into all the Community's policies.

The chief means used to achieve this end included:

- creation of a standing advisory body for liaison between the Commission and the Member States and to give its opinion on the broad lines of the strategy and action plan;
- establishment of a data base on problems concerning the Mediterranean environment and the measures taken or planned to solve them;
- establishment of a system to allow closer harmonization of the Community initiatives to help the Mediterranean environment and closer bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the national authorities or international bodies concerned;
- in-depth study of certain areas and testing of existing structures by demonstration projects.

During the preparatory phase, the Action extended to the entire Mediterranean region, not only the Mediterranean basin, in keeping with the thinking behind the communication to the Council dated 24 April 1984. It therefore covered almost all the Iberian peninsula, including the Ebro basin and all of Portugal and Spain south of the River Tagus. Several features of this region are typically Mediterranean: the temperatures, rainfall pattern, river flow, composition and distribution of fauna and flora, standard of living and environmental problems (forest fires, erosion, desertification, etc.).

3.2. Apart from information relating to the structures and organization of the programme, the data collected went further than providing just a general picture and identified several specific priority areas:

- water management,
- waste management,
- air quality management,
- nature conservation,
- rational use of land,
- management of the information needed to implement the programme planned,
- training,
- public awareness.

Within these fields, it was then possible to identify major problems specific to the Mediterranean region for which concrete measures could be planned by the Community, while fitting into the wider international context. In the process special links were established with, among others, the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the World Bank and the European Investment Bank so that the efforts undertaken along the same lines by these organizations would be made in tandem with the Commission.

All these measures are listed in the Annex and make up the action plan.

3.3. The results obtained militate in favour of intensified action as a firm but well-founded step from the preparatory phase to the action proper. This action is based on a general strategy aiming at implementation of an adequately funded set of measures.

4. STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

4.1. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY'S ACTION

The experience acquired during the preparatory phase produced a clearer idea of the forms of action to be taken by the Action and a firmer definition of its role.

(a) The first need was for an awareness of the fact that environmental pollution in the Mediterranean region is not only of local or regional consequence but has international, in particular European, reverberations. Consequently, only coordinated international action can cater for these multiple interests and efficiently manage the follow-up measures.

(b) The Commission can and must play an active role in the field of environmental protection. It has numerous means of doing so : directives, action programmes, international conventions, etc. Nonetheless, while building on past measures the Commission must also initiate new measures designed to put the Community policy on the environment in the forefront of the Single European Market in 1992.

(c) Guidance

- An Action by the Community for the protection of the environment in the Mediterranean region provides an opportunity for defining specific operations with consistent objectives. These operations, like the strategy, are based on a study and understanding of the general problems of the region and constitute the policy framework channelling the measures, inter alia, towards making the environmental dimension an integral part of action in the region under other Community policies. This operation acts as a catalyst.

- The policies pursued by the Community's structural Funds for the socio-economic development of the regions can also play an important part by financing some of the measures planned under the Action which will have a beneficial impact on the environment.

(d) Coherence

- The projects to protect the environment in this region cannot stand alone. The measures taken must form a unified, coherent whole, attacking the problems identified as acute and of major importance to the region.
- Focusing efforts on specific objectives can increase the impact by avoiding duplication of effort and bridging gaps in the current policy.

(e) Cooperation

- In this specific case effective cooperation must take place with other international bodies working towards similar objectives in the same region, particularly the UN specialized agencies such as the MAP.
- The protection of a semi-enclosed sea such as the Mediterranean can only be conceived of in a multilateral framework which involves all the riparian countries.

Community action to protect the Mediterranean should therefore cover the whole region and deploy all the means established by the international organizations active in this field, as well as those available in the framework of the cooperation agreements established by the Community with the non-Community Mediterranean countries and other Community instruments whereby action of this type can be carried out. In this field too, the Community's Action can make its support more effective and act as a catalyst with non-Community countries.

(f) Continuity

The Commission lent active support to the European Year of the Environment (EYE) (21 March 1987 - 20 March 1988).

The objectives of the Community's Action largely complement and fit in with those of EYE. The operations in question attach particular importance to arousing public awareness through demonstration projects, information campaigns and training courses.

EYE was of only limited duration. The proposed Action should follow up the efforts to attain its objectives in the Mediterranean region.

4.2. THE STRATEGY

1. Objectives

- (a) To step up efforts to protect and improve the quality of the environment and to implement Community environment policy in the region in question;
- (b) To help ensure that the environmental dimension is integrated into action taken under other Community policies;
- (c) To maintain and increase the effectiveness of Community action on the environment in the Mediterranean;
- (d) To improve the effectiveness of regional, national and international environmental protection measures in the region through greater cooperation;
- (e) To promote the transfer of appropriate technologies to protect the Mediterranean environment.

2. The implementation

- During the preparatory phase the analysis of the state of the environment, of the changes which have taken place and of likely future trends pinpointed the areas in which action is needed and the measures to be taken in each of them to overcome the problems identified.

These areas and measures are set out in the Annex.

- The operation will be carried out on the basis of research results. If specific needs appear during definition of the priorities, the direction of the Community research will be adapted accordingly.
- The measures taken under the operation must include both corrective and preventive measures.
- Vocational training and exchanges of technical information between specialists at all levels must be an integral component in all environment management policies and technology development programmes in order to avoid and eliminate pollution and ensure that the techniques and equipment employed operate properly.

This will entail encouraging and giving consideration to action in the following fields:

- technical assistance with projects,
- training and information for operators, administrators or other staff concerned,
- stimulating public awareness of the need for rational management of the environment.
- Public awareness campaigns aimed at everyone with an interest in the environmental problems of the Mediterranean region, whether the local population or holiday-makers, must regularly remind every individual of his share of the responsibility. Non-Community countries must also be kept informed of the efforts made and of the legislation and technical achievements in the Community.
- The measures taken to implement the Action will take account both of the "polluter pays" principle and of the socio-economic and structural peculiarities of the region.
- The international dimension of the problems must be taken into account at every level when implementing the Action.
- Management of the information needed for the Action.

Any steps to define priorities for medium- to long-term measures must automatically be based on the fullest information available on the situation and how it is developing, including data on the ecosystem under consideration, an inventory of the types of discharge and sources, details of the resources already available and information on the action taken by other organizations and the need for any new measures to back it up.

- Application of legal obligations

Application of the legal instruments such as Community Directives and Treaties or international conventions and protocols is the responsibility of the Member States.

However, account must be taken of the situations peculiar to the Mediterranean. Community aid is justified to narrow the gap between regions and help Mediterranean areas that are less prosperous and more vulnerable ecologically to catch up. This aid will speed up the application of legal obligations with a view, in particular, to the establishment of the Single European market in 1992.

- The measures taken to implement the operation will have to be managed. The choice of projects and priorities will be based on common criteria of selection in accordance with the rules and provisions governing the Funds and on the basis of specific criteria. The projects will be monitored to ensure that the aid is used effectively and that the objectives are attained.

Integration of the environmental dimension in other policies

- The main aim is to increase awareness of and, as far as possible, incorporate measures under the proposed action into Community policies for other sectors, including economic affairs, industry, energy, agriculture, social affairs, transport and regional development, so that they contribute towards efforts to protect the environment of the Mediterranean, while still giving priority to their own objectives.

- Cooperation

Special attention will be paid to ways of harmonizing and integrating operations undertaken by the Action into all regional, national, Community and international efforts with the same objectives.

Such is the degree of interdependence on environmental matters that to achieve the objectives pursued by the Action it may be necessary to assign priority to the needs of non-Community Mediterranean countries, in the absence of other means available.

4.3. THE ACTION PLAN

1. The action plan spans the ten years from 1989 to 1998 and is divided into two phases, each lasting five years. By the end of the fourth year of the Action at the latest, the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, will have to reassess the priorities for the second phase and the need for any changes to the measures planned.

2. The measures will be implemented:

- with dovetailing between the measures undertaken under this action plan and those carried out under the structural Funds and other Community financial instruments;
- in cooperation with the international organizations conducting programmes with similar objectives in the same region;
- in cooperation with the research and development programmes.

3. The Action covers a vast, highly varied field. To focus the efforts and strike the right balance with the resources available, a number of priorities have been selected for the first phase of the Action. Three criteria were applied when selecting the priority measures:

(i) The specifically Mediterranean nature of the problem

Measures concerning problems specific to this part of southern Europe, such as the disappearance of endangered fauna, forest fires, diseases in certain species of Mediterranean flora, soil erosion, changes in traditional farming methods and problems of pollution or prevention of pollution resulting from the main agricultural activities in the region plus the problems of air pollution connected with the region's climate and weather, will be treated as priorities.

(ii) The common interest of several Mediterranean countries

In areas eligible for financial aid under the Action, particular weight will be given to measures of interest to several European countries in the Mediterranean region, including non-Community countries.

(iii) The degree of urgency

The aim is to ease the most serious, rapidly developing problems jeopardizing human health or the survival of endangered species before the damage becomes irreversible.

4.4. THE RESOURCES

The Community's Action needs adequate resources.

1. Many of the measures set out in the annex could be eligible for financial support from the own resources of the Community's present instruments:

(a) The structural Funds:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF Guidance Section);
- the European Social Fund (ESF).

(b) The Community's financial instruments:

- the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMPs);
- the action by the Community relating to the Environment (ACE);
- the Community action to protect forests;
- the financial instruments set up under the cooperation agreements with non-Community Mediterranean countries;
- measures to develop new and renewable energy sources, new technology in energy and energy programming.
- the existing financial instruments to promote multilateral and regional cooperation, and environmental protection in developing countries, mediterranean riparian States.

(c) The lending instruments:

- the European Investment Bank (EIB)
- the New Community Instrument (NCI)
- ECSC loans

2. The Commission will take the appropriate measures to apply the various Funds in the implementation of certain categories of actions set out in the annex and will take steps to coordinate support from the new Community instrument which is to be created with that from the existing financial instruments. Support from these instruments will take the form laid down in the rules and objectives governing each of these instruments.

The support in question will be implemented, in particular, under, or on the basis of one or more operational programmes undertaken on the Commission's initiative pursuant to Article 5(5) of Regulation EEC N° 2052/88 of 24 June 1988 on the tasks of the structural Funds, and in accordance with regulations subject to the application of the above-mentioned regulation. These (implementing) Regulations were proposed by the Commission to the Council on 30 August 1988 and are due to enter into force on 1st January 1989.

3. The Action could have also at its disposal specific financial resources. The support from own resources will be complementary or additional to the existing financial instruments. It will be paid towards management and the cost of operations fitting into the planned measures but ineligible for support from the existing instruments.

This aid from own resources will be aimed principally at stimulation and public awareness campaigns producing a knock-on effect. It will be aimed also at providing technical assistance and expertise in the preparation of plans and operational programmes intended at national and local level, contributing to achievement of the actions mentioned in the annex. They may thus

include pilot or demonstration projects and also make use of varied forms of finance such as granting of subsidies, interest rebates and repayable advances.

With regard to the Mediterranean non-member countries whose requirements, in view of the lack of structural Funds capable of intervening, will receive special attention, the operations financed should, in particular, make it possible to take greater account of the environment as a priority in their policy of development and cooperation with the Community.

4. At the moment environmental loans account for 20% of the EIB's activity every year.

The Bank has wide and varied experience in funding projects similar to those covered by the programme in the Mediterranean region, to which it paid 350 million ECU in 1987.

Conditions are therefore favourable for substantial Community support in the form of the appropriate mix of grants and loans.

5. Conclusions

The presentation of this Communication will be completed as soon as possible by the definition, by the Commission, of the provisions determining the financial resources which will have to be made available for the implementation of the action, as well as the manner in which these resources shall be used.

ANNEX

Action by the Community for the protection of the environment
in the Mediterranean region

1. Measures relating to water management

Improved water availability

- (a) development of the potential resources available;
- (b) encouragement to re-use and recycle water;
- (c) identification and exploitation of new sources and particularly of sources of fresh water lost to the sea (a phenomenon typical of karst rock formations such as those occurring frequently in the Mediterranean basin);
- (d) intensification of measures to combat wastage by industry and human settlements.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to projects to solve problems of water supply in isolated island communities.

Protection and/or improvement of water quality

Protection of water quality should concentrate on promoting projects for:

- (f) treating raw water;
- (g) installing waste-water treatment facilities in order to prevent untreated discharges into the aquatic environment;
- (h) installing sewerage systems;
- (i) protecting aquifers against pollution and overexploitation;
- (j) equipping ports to treat ballast water and oily and other chemical waste from ships.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to projects:

- to install sewage treatment plants and the associated infrastructure in every town with over 100 000 inhabitants;
- to install sewerage systems, outfalls and/or appropriate sewage treatment equipment in every town with between 10 000 and 100 000 inhabitants;
- to implement measure (j) in respect of ballast water and oily waste.

2. Measures relating to waste management

Municipal waste

- (a) education of the general public and the responsible authorities on the importance of waste management;
- (b) organization and implementation of safe controlled disposal of municipal waste;
- (c) measures to combat uncontrolled dumping and to improve selective waste-collection and waste-disposal systems;
- (d) clean-up of many existing tips;
- (e) measures to encourage more efficient management of waste, which should be re-used as compost, fuel or secondary raw material, and to promote biodegradable materials.
- (f) equipment of ports with reception facilities for waste from shipping.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to projects concerning:

- measure (a);
- measure (b) in response to the problems faced by isolated islands with a low population density.

Industrial waste

- (g) promotion of on-site treatment, zero-discharge layouts and changes in products and manufacturing processes;
- (h) promotion of non-polluting or low-pollution technologies;
- (i) planning the establishment of a market in waste and a waste bank;
- (j) encouragement of the construction of treatment centres and/or special disposal sites, in particular for toxic and hazardous waste, taking

account of geomorphological characteristics (calcareous rock, high porosity) and seismic risks;

- (k) promotion of recycling.

Sewage sludge

- (l) development of risk-free use of sewage sludge in agriculture;
(m) management, control, safe disposal or marketing of sewage sludge organized in conjunction with programmes to build treatment stations.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to measure (l).

Agricultural waste

- (n) encouragement of risk-free re-use of agricultural waste and waste water for crops;
(o) use of waste to meet energy requirements;
(p) promotion of the use of adequate equipment for the treatment and/or processing of agricultural waste, including waste from livestock farming and olive oil production, so that it can be re-used.

3. Measures relating to air management

- (a) examination of the needs for air pollution measuring networks;
(b) establishment/improvement of measuring networks;
(c) support for the use of methods to reduce pollutant emissions (fixed and mobile sources) including clean technologies and clean energies appropriate to local conditions;

- (d) protection of the architectural heritage against the effects of air pollution;
- (e) development of strategies against the formation of photochemical "smog";
- (f) specific measures according to the nature of the areas to control the precursors contributing to the formation of photochemical oxidants.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to measure (e).

4. Measures relating to nature conservation

- (a) conservation of nature in general, fauna and flora, landscapes and, in particular, protection or reintroduction of endangered species;
- (b) protection against forest fires;
- (c) protection of the soil against overexploitation of groundwater;
- (d) protection of the soil against erosion and protection of plant cover;
- (e) development of tourism not deleterious to the environment.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to projects concerning:

- the protection of wetlands;
- seals and tortoises;
- measure (b) to limit soil degradation and desertification.

5. Measures relating to the rational use of land

- (a) integrated protection of coasts and coastal regions;
- (b) reclamation of urban and industrial sites;
- (c) improvement of the quality of life in isolated areas;
- (d) incentives to promote an appropriate land-use policy with a view to integrated planning.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to projects:

- to prevent floods (measures (a) and (c);
- to locate and restore sites contaminated by toxic or hazardous wastes;
- measure (d).

6. Measures relating to information management

All measures relating to the collection, input and management of the data needed to manage the action by the Community for the protection of the environment in the Mediterranean region, and in particular to evaluate problems in the region concerned and select priorities.

Priority in implementation of the actions.

7. Measures relating to implementation of Community acts

All incentives to ensure better or wider application of the Community Directives with a bearing on the planned measures.

8. Measures relating to training

Measures for training management staff and operators on methods, techniques and equipment to protect or improve the environment.

During the first five-year phase priority will be given to:

- training sewage treatment plant managers and operators;
- training managers and operators in techniques and equipment for implementing the projects selected.

9. Measures relating to public education and awareness

All measures to make the local population, seasonal visitors and the authorities aware of the need to protect the environment. All measures to publicize the action by the Community for the protection of the environment in the Mediterranean region, its objectives, its benefits and its achievements. Priority in implementation of the action.