

Romania's commitment at European Union integration

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Abstract

Environmental protection is one of the horizontal policies of the European Union these days. Its main aim is to design and apply all policies of the Community and its member states. The integrated approach should be linked to the general integration strategies of the last decade of the previous century which were lowly adjusted to the pattern of sustainable development.

The Maastricht Treaty raises environmental policy to the “rank” of Community policy and the Amsterdam Treaty includes the principle of sustainable development to the main Community objectives. It also regulates the application of the Environmental Integration Principle to sectorial policies. The European Union has elaborated a complex system of horizontal Community Laws by designing six environment action programs. They occur in the following fields: air quality, waste management, water quality, landscape protection, industrial pollution and risk management, dangerous chemical substances and genetically modified organisms, noise, civil protection, nuclear safety and radioprotection. EU has changed the sectorial approach into an integrated one, has developed principles and action and has taken important steps in international cooperation on environment safety.

Currently, the European Union runs the stages of the Sixth Action Programme “Environment 2010-2015: Our future, our choice” which focuses on four main areas of action: climate changes, environment and health, nature and bio-diversity and management of natural resources.

When adhering to the European Union, according to Negotiation Chapter 22, Romania assumed to fulfill the European regulations and to allocate financial amounts

in order to apply coherent measures in the field of Environmental protection. As full member of the European Union, Romania defined its own consistent policies in order to follow the strategic direction and priorities of the European Commission. While the Community Acquis was already adopted, further actions and environmental activities aim to reach the targets for each negotiated transition period.

Keywords: Negotiating chapters between Romania and the European Commission, main environmental objectives and targets, Community Acquis, Transition

Introduction to Romania's environmental policy

Romania's environmental policy began in the 90^s after the foundation of the Ministry of Environment. In 1992 Romania has adapted The National Strategy for Environmental Protection, updated in 1996 and 2002.

According to the strategy, the main objectives related to environment in Romania were:

1. preservation and improvement of people's health conditions;
2. sustainable development;
3. pollution prevention;
4. preservation of bio-diversity;
5. preservation of cultural and historical heritage;
6. application of the principle "the polluter should pay";
7. stimulation of environmental recovery (by allotting subventions, credits with low interest, etc).

The strategy has been supplemented in 1999 by the "*Environmental Status Report of Romania*" and "*The National Waste Management Strategy*" (2002). The most important steps in the legislation, favored by the national strategy and by the EU membership program, were registered in the legislation related to the impact assessment, dangerous waste, waste landfills, packaging waste and waste transportation,

legislation on wastewater, drinking water, pollution caused by hazardous waste, identification of spaces that require special protection, industrial pollution control, measures for the safety of nuclear fields [4].

Romania, as a member of the European Union, has to implement the community acquis on environment. The application of variable geometry strategy in the European model of integration facilitates the gradual enactment and application of community legislation by using the transition period and the transitional arrangements. These extension tools have been a support for our country, if we consider the high exigency of environmental protection in EU as compared to Romania's possibilities of legislation enforcement and the financial resources required by the insertion of the ecological responsibility principle among the citizens.

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The Negotiation Chapter "**Environment**" (chapter 22) was opened in May 2002 and closed in 2004. After the negotiation Romania obtained the following transitional periods [2]:

- 3 transitional periods of 1, 2 and 3 years for compliance with the Directive on emission of volatile organic compounds from the storage of petrol and its distribution from the petrol distribution stations;
- 3 transitional periods of 3, 4 and 5 years to achieve the goals on recovery and recycling of plastic, glass and wood in compliance with the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive;
- 2 transitions periods of 1 and 2 years for compliance with the Waste Incineration Directive;
- 3 transition periods of 3, 7 and 9 years for the compliance of 130 storages with the Waste Storage Directive;
- 2 transition periods of 2 years to reach the collecting and recycling targets as regulated by the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive;

- 2 transition periods of 5 and 9 years for the full application of Regulations on Waste Shipment and *waiver from the application of article 7(4) on the period of temporary waiver for the destination installation;*
- 2 transition periods of 9 and 12 years for the application of regulations on treatment of urban waste water;
- 2 transition periods of 4 and 9 years for the compliance with all 9 quality parameters regulated by the Drinking Water Directive;
- 1 transition period of 3 years for 51 industrial plants for 8 hazardous waste;
- 1 transition period of 8 and 2 years for 195 installations that have to comply with the integrated pollution and prevention control Directive;
- 3 transition periods of 6 years for reduction of emissions in 34 large combustion plants, for the compliance with NOX requirements within 69 installations and powder limit values for 26 installations. Romania has also 1 year additional time to comply with the NOX requirement within 6 installations.

The Commission estimates costs of approximately 22 billion Euros [2] required for the compliance with European legislation on environment issues. But the implementation of the European acquis on environmental issues will prevent us from making the same errors as “older” Member States have made in the process of their economic development and thus bring about a faster improvement of environment and life conditions. Not at least, nature protection favors economic growth, creates jobs, develops labor markets with essential role in social welfare [3].

Romania has managed to corroborate domestic legislation with the community acquis on environment, but the Commission’s reports have drawn attention constantly on the administrative limitations of PEM application as well as on the reduced possibilities of financing it, due to lack of proper financial tools. The European Community supported Romania through a series of financial pre-accession instruments like Phare and ISPA, participation in LIFE programs and Community Initiatives as well as financial support provided by European Bank of Investment [1].

Romania`s strategic action plan on the compliance of domestic legislation and environment actions with the environmental policy of the European Union

The priority of Environmental Policy application is the enactment of sectorial strategies that would integrate environmental components (according to the objectives of sustainable development) and improve the administrative structures of implementation. The Government considers that the community acquis has been fully enacted up to the moment of accession (January, 1st, 2007), and the implementation plans have been put into practice. As far as strategic actions are concerned, the stress in Romania`s Environmental Policy is laid on a series of priority axes that would strengthen the preventive component [5]:

- a. The development of integrated monitoring of the environment;
- b. Eco-production and sustainable consumption;
- c. Decentralization of institutional system and the application of responsibility principle on all levels and in all fields;
- d. The development of market targeted tools;
- e. International cooperation on continuous environmental protection.

We can notice that priority axes in Romania`s Environmental Policy are linked to European strategic directions on environment.

Conclusions

Environmental protection is one of the horizontal policies of the European Union these days. Its main aim is to design and apply all policies of the Community and its member states. The integrated approach should be linked to the general integration strategies of the last decade of the previous century which were lowly adjusted to the pattern of sustainable development.

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complex system of horizontal Community Laws by designing six environment action programs. They occur in the following fields: air quality, waste management, water quality, landscape protection, industrial pollution and risk management, dangerous chemical substances and genetically modified organisms, noise, civil protection, nuclear safety and radioprotection. EU has changed the sectorial approach into an integrated one, has developed principles and action and has taken important steps in international cooperation on environment safety.

Currently, the European Union runs the stages of the Sixth Action Program “Environment 2010-2015: Our future, our choice” which focuses on four main areas of action: climate changes, environment and health, nature and bio-diversity and management of natural resources.

In the over 30 years of community actions on environmental protection the Commission states that the most important results obtained are: reduction of industrial waste, limitation or banning of certain hazardous substances with high environmental and health risks, reduction of acid in waters, improvement of waste management, and improvement of water, air and soil quality. The next few years will be dedicated to those strategies and instruments that would promote a better correlation between the environment objectives and those of a free market (especially by changing production and consumption behaviors).

A more effective and coherent integration of environment in sectorial policies will be also a goal in the next years. Moreover, one of the great challenges will be the compliance of the new Member States with the Environmental Policy of the European Union. As full member of the European Union, Romania designed and implements a set of integrated action in order to comply with EU regulations according to the agreed schedule.

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