

## FORESTRY POLICY

Forests are both an essential element of our natural heritage and a complete resource in their own right, a reservoir of raw materials and a working tool. The area covered by forests in the European Union has considerably reduced over the centuries. Thanks to the effective reforestation efforts undertaken in several Member States, that trend has been reversed.

As a result of this development, forest management has become a focus of attention for all. Exposed to acid rain in Northern Europe and devastating fires in Southern Europe, forests are now fragile areas ecologically, economically and also geographically (immediate proximity of major urban centres, transport infrastructures, etc).

Aware of the role of this natural resource in terms of the environment (absorption of carbon dioxide, natural habitat for many animal species, combating erosion and desertification), the EPP-ED Group advocates a policy of sustainable development for Europe's forest heritage, particularly by maintaining and improving forest areas.

The wood processing industry is mainly made up of a network of small family businesses coexisting with the industrial paper sector, which is mainly made up of large entities.

The EPP-ED Group advocates establishing a sustainable development strategy for Europe's forests, in order to preserve traditional know-how and support technical innovation while respecting ecosystems.

Beyond our borders, in Asia and South America in particular, the Group supports the funding of measures to benefit the tropical rainforests, which are a significant challenge in terms of our world natural heritage.

*Géraldine Philibert*

*See also leaflets on Environmental Policy and Consumer Protection.*

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GROUP OF THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY  
(CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS) AND EUROPEAN DEMOCRATS  
IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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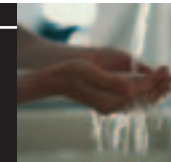
## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

One of the major challenges of our times is achieving sustainable development in the world and therefore establishing a long-term strategy aimed at reconciling environmental, economic and social policies.

The European Union put forward the main outlines for this strategy in the conclusions of the Gothenburg European Council and during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (Rio + 10) which took place in Johannesburg.

Among the most important aims of the strategy are: limiting the effects of climate change (by gradually reducing greenhouse gases by 1% per year compared with 1990 levels by 2020), limiting major risks to public health, safety and the quality of foodstuffs at all levels of the food chain, eliminating risks to health and the environment linked to chemicals, combating epidemics and resistance to antibiotics, more sustainable management of natural resources, reducing damage to biodiversity before 2010 and limiting the adverse effects of transport.

From this point of view, the EPP-ED Group advocates an overall policy based on a dynamic and environmentally and socially responsible market economy by making every effort necessary to achieve greater fairness at world level and to eradicate poverty, including funding development and scientific and technological transfer, achieving a better integration and coherence between policies at international level.

**Amarylli Gersony**

## BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is an integral part of our natural heritage. Its balance is threatened by numerous factors linked to the development of human activity (urban development, industry, agriculture, transport infrastructures, pollution, etc.).

In both the animal and plant worlds, it has now become essential to protect and preserve the most threatened species. Today protection measures alone are unfortunately not sufficient to prevent the disappearance of certain species in the near future. This is why prevention measures are also a priority.

The protection of natural habitats for fauna is a vital part of these measures. The most fragile ecosystems which are therefore the most sensitive to human intervention are being made a priority: marsh and swamp wetlands, mountainous areas and coastal areas.

The EPP-ED Group strongly believes that it is possible to reconcile human activity with maintaining the natural balance. So, for example, farmers have an essential role to play in preserving the countryside and local and regional authorities have to be stakeholders in managing sustainable urban development and planning for natural areas.

The EPP-ED Group has always advocated establishing ambitious programmes such as 'Natura 2000' and 'Life Nature', which safeguard our natural heritage, and their work is not confined within the borders of Europe. There is also action being taken at international level for the world's natural heritage, for example particularly with regard to tropical forests and world trade in animal and plant species, etc.

The EPP-ED Group believes that it is our duty to preserve the wealth of natural heritage for future generations, both at local and world level.

**Géraldine Philibert**

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

Traditional fossil energy resources are not inexhaustible. The earth cannot give us any more than it has.

New energy sources, which are called renewable sources because they are not derived from simply extracting raw materials, require the development of know-how and technological potential that has not yet been well explored.

They therefore represent a great hope for the future, but also a real challenge, because they will help us to effectively combat climate change. Many experiments have been conducted: wind power, the hydrogen development programme, etc.

The European Union is one of the most developed areas in the world with the highest levels of technology and the best know-how.

Research into renewable energy sources should enable us to reverse the trend of systematically exhausting natural resources, and it also has huge potential in terms of added value and employment that we cannot ignore.

The challenge of future development demands that we master these new types of energy, which is why the EPP-ED Group is working to promote and encourage these clean energy sources, which need gradually to replace fossil fuels.

**Géraldine Philibert**

## SOIL EROSION

Soil is an essential and integral part of the earth's environment and as such its conservation status has a very great influence on the quality of life of Europe's citizens.

Among the main environmental threats to which the European Union is exposed are soil erosion, decline in organic matter content, contamination, soil sealing (caused by the construction of homes, roads and other infrastructures), soil compaction (caused by mechanical pressure from heavy machinery, overgrazing and sporting activities), decline in soil biodiversity, salinisation (excessive accumulation of soluble salts of sodium, magnesium and calcium) as well as floods, landslides and desertification. All these processes are a result of or are aggravated by human activity and some have worsened over the last few decades. The economic consequences and repair costs associated with the threats hanging over soils are enormous.

It is therefore essential to have an overall Community strategy for soil conservation. In order to respond to that need, the principal objectives of the sixth environmental action programme include the protection of soil against erosion and pollution. Nevertheless, we should not forget that measures undertaken as part of other policies (environmental, agricultural, regional, transport, research) have an influence on soil protection.

The Community strategy is based above all on the principles of precaution, anticipation and environmental responsibility, and is focused around existing initiatives as part of environmental policies, better integration of soil protection into other policies, soil monitoring and fresh measures based on the results.

The EPP-ED Group is aware of the fact that we need to act quickly to curb soil erosion, whether it is due to natural deterioration, human action or the climate. The Group therefore strongly supports the need to implement an integrated approach to sustainable development for soil conservation, which should impact on many sectors such as balanced town planning, sustainable agriculture, maintaining groundwater levels and the visual impact of all forms of soil degradation.

**Amarylli Gersony**