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Environment

Luxembourg, 25 June 2018

President **Neno Dimov**
Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of
Bulgaria

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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ITEMS DEBATED

Circular economy

The Council adopted conclusions on delivering on the EU action plan for the circular economy, which aims to reduce waste and maintain the value of products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible.

The purpose of the action plan is to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy, one which is more sustainable and competitive than the current model. It introduces measures to cut resource use, reduce waste and boost recycling.

The Council conclusions provide the Commission with guidance for the implementation of the EU action plan, the European plastics strategy and measures to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation. The conclusions focus in particular on monitoring and follow-up with a view to achieving the objectives of the action plan.

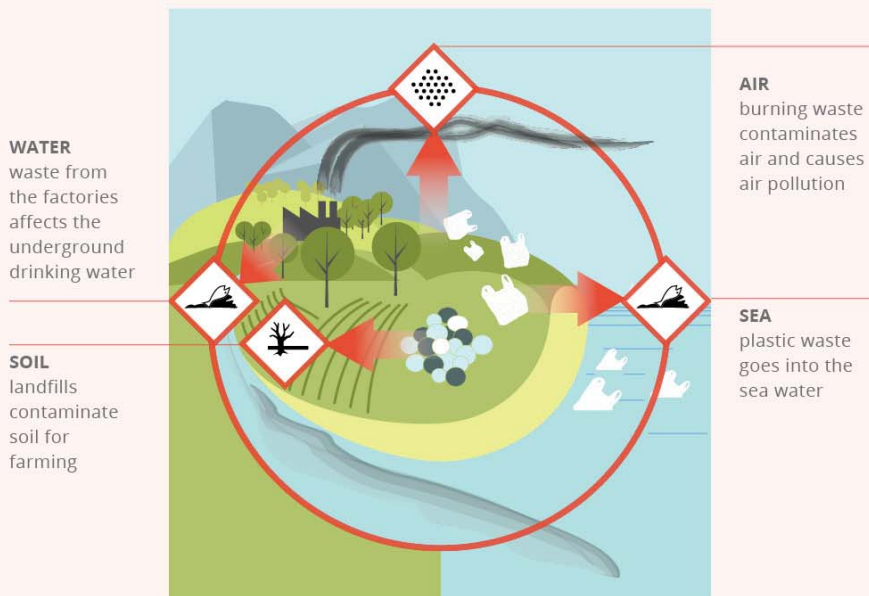
[Full text of the Council conclusions](#)

[Press release](#)

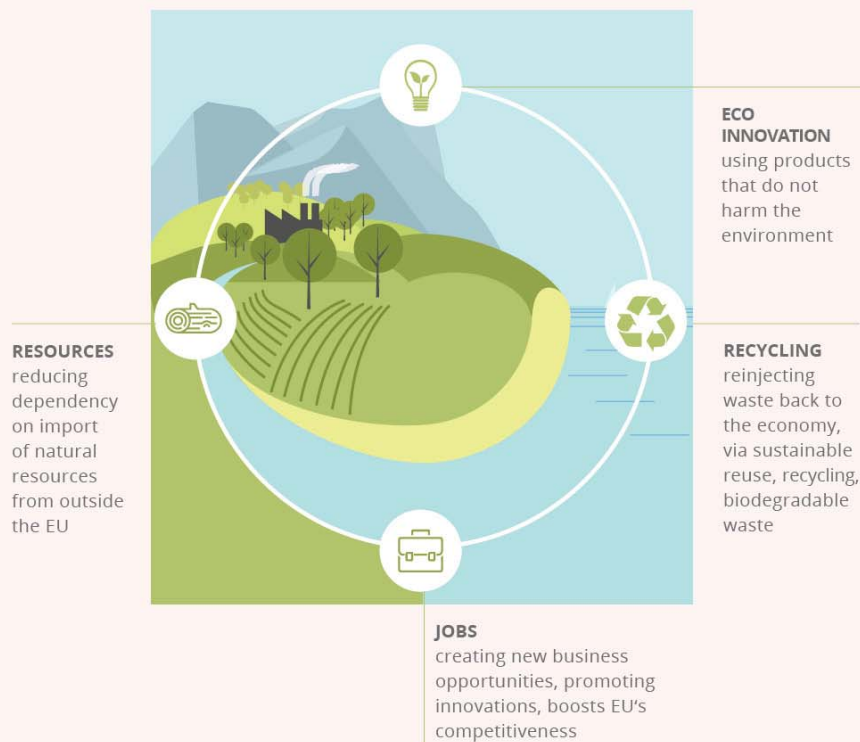
[Infographic](#)

Why circular economy?

WASTE IN TRADITIONAL MODEL



MINIMISING WASTE: CIRCULAR ECONOMY



Drinking water

Environment ministers held a policy debate on the directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption (recast), also known as the drinking water directive. Its quality parameters and approach to monitoring were determined over 20 years ago. The proposed update to this directive is a direct result of the first ever successful European citizens' initiative, Right2Water, which attracted more than 1.8 million signatures.

The main elements of this proposal are the updating of water quality standards, the introduction of a risk-based approach to the monitoring of water, the improvement and harmonisation of information on water quality and services to consumers, the harmonisation of standards for products in contact with drinking water and the introduction of obligations to improve access to water.

The Bulgarian presidency guided the debate by structuring the discussion around the following questions.

On the harmonisation of materials:

- Do you agree that harmonisation of materials and products in contact with drinking water should be conducted under internal market legislation, including the full harmonisation of hygienic requirements, or should the member states retain discretion to set stricter requirements under environment legislation?
- If the harmonisation of materials and products in contact with drinking water were to be addressed under the construction products regulation, do you see any shortcomings with this approach and, if so, how should they be addressed? If you propose an alternative, could you explain how it will work with regard to feasibility and legal certainty?

On access to water:

- Is the drinking water directive the most adequate instrument to regulate the obligation to assure access to water, having also in mind the European citizens' initiative 'Right2Water'?
- If there were to be a provision on access to water, should it list measures to implement access to water or should member states be granted further flexibility to choose the most appropriate measures adapted to their cultural and geographic circumstances?

Ministers welcomed the initiative to update the drinking water directive and highlighted the fact that a high level of protection of human health was the priority in the review process.

On the harmonisation of standards for materials in contact with water, most ministers pointed out that harmonising standards under the construction products regulation would be insufficient and that minimum hygiene requirements should be set in this directive.

Regarding the right to access to water, ministers welcomed the first ever successful European citizens' initiative Right2Water which inspired some of the provisions in the Commission's proposal, and agreed on the principle of improved access that respected the principle of subsidiarity and left member states enough flexibility to decide on and implement measures that took into account geographic and cultural circumstances.

Today's policy debate provided guidance for further work on the drinking water directive under the Austrian presidency.

Presidency note ([8924/18](#))

Commission proposal ([5846/18](#) + [ADD 1-5](#))

CO₂ standards for cars and vans

Environment ministers held a policy debate on the regulation on CO₂ emission standards for cars and vans. The aim of the proposal is to help the EU to reach its 30% reduction target by 2030 (compared to 2005 levels) in the sectors not covered by the emissions trading system and to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. To this end, the Commission has proposed EU-wide CO₂ emissions reduction targets for new passenger cars and vans of 15% from 2025 to 2029 and 30% from 2030 compared to the targets for 2021 set by previous legislation. These are EU-wide targets which will be translated into a specific target for each car and van manufacturer. To progressively further the uptake of zero- and low-emission vehicles, for example electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, the Commission proposal includes a mechanism from 2025 onwards to incentivise manufacturers to place a higher number of these vehicles on the market. If its share of zero- and low-emission vehicles exceeds certain benchmarks, the manufacturer will be rewarded with less strict CO₂ emission targets. The proposed benchmark is 15% from 2025 to 2029 and 30% from 2030 onwards.

The Bulgarian presidency asked ministers to respond to two questions:

- Does the proposed level of ambition concerning the 2025 and 2030 targets for cars and vans strike the right balance in terms of providing an adequate contribution to reducing CO₂ emissions and ensuring European jobs and growth and competitiveness of the European automotive industry?
- Is the incentive mechanism for zero- and low-emission vehicles as proposed by the Commission the best and most efficient way to further the uptake of these vehicles?

In general ministers welcomed the Commission proposal for new CO₂ emission standards for new cars and vans as a key step towards meeting the EU's climate objectives and the goals of the Paris Agreement. All recognised the need to reduce emissions, in particular from the transport sector, and to agree on effective measures towards low-carbon mobility. Ministers recognised the importance of common EU rules, as national rules would not be sufficient to drive the necessary technological development and to decarbonise the transport sector.

Some ministers supported the level of ambition of the Commission's proposal. Several environment ministers called for more ambitious targets than those presented in the Commission proposal, some stressing that Europe must lead the global transition towards low-emission vehicles. Some ministers, however, concerned about maintaining jobs and the competitiveness of the automotive industry, argued that the proposal was already too ambitious. They called for ambitious but achievable targets and a clear and sensible framework with sufficient flexibility. Several ministers mentioned the risk of increased imports of more polluting second-hand cars to low-income member states as a result of the reduction targets, making it more difficult for those member states to achieve their national reduction targets set by the effort sharing regulation.

Ministers' comments will serve as political guidance for further work with a view to reaching agreement on the Council's position at a later stage. Both the 2025 and 2030 targets and the incentives for zero- and low-emission vehicles are considered key to finding an agreement.

Note on the policy debate ([9728/18](#))

Commission proposal ([14217/1/17](#) + [ADD1 REV 1](#))

Any other business– *Current legislative proposals*

The Commission gave presentations on current legislative proposals in the field of environment and climate action. These presentations were broadcast live.

- LIFE: [proposal for a regulation establishing a programme for the environment and climate action \(LIFE\)](#) + [ADD 1](#)
- Water reuse: [proposal for a regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse](#) + [ADD 1](#)
- Single-use plastics: [proposal for a directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment](#) + [COR 1](#) + [ADD 1](#)
- Alignment of environmental reporting obligations: [proposal for a regulation on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of environment policy](#)
- CO₂ standards for heavy-duty vehicles: [proposal for a regulation setting CO₂ emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles](#)

– *EU pollinators initiative*

The Commission informed the Council about an initiative to protect pollinators such as honeybees, wild bees and other wild pollinators ([9744/18](#) + [ADD 1-2](#)).

– *Global pact for the environment beyond 2020 - a new global deal on chemicals and waste*

The Council took note of the information provided by the Swedish delegation with support from the Luxembourg delegation ([10104/18](#)).

– ***Obtaining ambitious results at COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2020***

The Council took note of the information provided by the French delegation with support from the Luxembourg delegation ([10120/18](#)).

– ***Work programme of the incoming presidency***

The Council took note of the information provided by the Austrian delegation ([10297/18](#)).

– ***Reports on recent international meetings***

The Commission informed the Council about recent international meetings relevant to environment ministers ([9944/18](#)):

- EU for Talanoa (Brussels, 13 June 2018)
- Ninth Petersberg Climate Dialogue (Berlin, 17-19 June 2018)
- Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) (Brussels, 20 and 21 June 2018)

– ***Inclusion of Paris Agreement compliance as an essential element of EU agreements and enforceability of sustainable development provisions of trade agreements through the dispute settlement mechanism***

The Council took note of the information provided by the French delegation ([9837/18](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENVIRONMENT

Heavy-duty vehicles

The Council adopted a regulation on the monitoring and reporting of CO₂ emissions from and fuel consumption of new heavy-duty vehicles. This regulation forms part of the EU's overall efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions and is a step towards a competitive low-carbon economy ([PE-CONS 20/18](#)).

[Press release](#)

Invasive alien species

The Council decided not to object to a Commission delegated regulation concerning risk assessment in relation to invasive alien species.

The regulation sets out the common elements which need to be considered in a risk assessment, the methodology and the type of evidence that should underpin a risk assessment. Member states may submit requests to the European Commission for the inclusion of additional invasive alien species on the Union list, and each request needs to be accompanied by a risk assessment ([9992/18](#) + [ADD 1](#), [8532/18](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. Unless the European Parliament objects, it can now be published in the Official Journal of the European Union and it will enter into force on the 20th day following its publication.

South Atlantic whale sanctuary

The Council approved a demarche by the EU and its member states on joining Brazil in support of the creation of a South Atlantic whale sanctuary. The EU and its member states have consistently supported the proposal since it was first put forward in 1998. The objective of the demarche is to raise awareness among third countries which have so far voted against the proposal, and thus achieve the required three-quarters majority for the proposal to be adopted at the next International Whaling Commission meeting in Florianapolis, Brazil, from 10 to 14 September 2018.

TRADE

Trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand

On 25 June, the Council decided to publish the mandates given to the Commission on 22 May to negotiate trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand.

The Commission officially launched the trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand on 18 and 21 June, respectively. A first round of talks is expected to take place in July.

For more information see press release: [Trade with Australia and New Zealand: negotiating directives made public](#)

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Schengen Information System - Bulgaria and Romania

The Council adopted a decision on the putting into effect of the remaining provisions of the Schengen acquis relating to the Schengen Information System (SIS) in Bulgaria and Romania. This will allow Bulgaria and Romania to use the SIS without any remaining restrictions ([15820/1/17](#)).

The lifting of the restrictions in Bulgaria and Romania will help to increase the level of security in the Schengen area and make the fight against serious crime and terrorism more effective.

Internal security fund

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the EU-Switzerland agreement on supplementary rules in relation to the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa, as part of the internal security fund, for the period 2014-2020 ([6222/18](#)).

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the EU-Iceland agreement on supplementary rules in relation to the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa, as part of the internal security fund, for the period 2014-2020 ([9228/17](#) + [COR 1](#)).

The regulation establishing, as part of the internal security fund, the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa provides that the countries associated with the implementation, application and development of the Schengen acquis participate in this instrument. To this end, arrangements are concluded on their financial contributions and the supplementary rules necessary for such participation.

FISHERIES

2018 fishing opportunities amended

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 2018/120 as regards certain fishing opportunities.

Council regulation 2018/120 fixes the fishing opportunities for 2018 for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in Union waters and, for Union vessels, in certain non-Union waters. It needed to be amended in order to include new species in the list of prohibited species and take account of the latest scientific advice (ICES, SPRFMO) and the decisions of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

North Pacific Ocean high seas fisheries resources: negotiations to accede to the convention

The Council adopted a decision authorising the opening of negotiations on behalf of the EU to accede to the convention for the conservation and management of high seas fisheries resources in the North Pacific Ocean. The Council also agreed on the related negotiating directives.

TRANSPORT

Civil aviation safety - training organisations

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 1178/2011 as regards declared training organisations ([8306/18](#)).

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

CUSTOMS UNION

Tariffs and quotas on certain products

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 1388/2013 opening and providing for the management of autonomous tariff quotas of the EU for certain agricultural and industrial products from 1 July 2018 ([9604/18](#)).

The regulation aims to ensure that adequate and uninterrupted supplies of products which are not produced in sufficient quantity in the EU can be imported at reduced or zero duty rates of the common customs tariff for appropriate volumes, without disturbing the markets for such products.

The Council also adopted a regulation amending regulation 1387/2013 suspending the autonomous common customs tariff duties on certain agricultural, fishery and industrial products from 1 July 2018 ([9641/18](#)).

RESEARCH

Supercomputers - European joint undertaking

The Council agreed to give a boost to high-performance computing infrastructure by establishing a [new European joint undertaking](#).

The European high-performance computing (EuroHPC) joint undertaking will oversee the pooling of resources within Europe to develop supercomputers for processing big data.

The joint undertaking will take the form of a public-private partnership. It will provide a legal, contractual and organisational framework for its members.

The members of the joint undertaking will be the EU, individual EU countries, third countries associated with the Horizon 2020 programme and private associations.

The EuroHPC joint undertaking will be financed from several sources: the EU's general budget, individual contributions from participating EU member states and participating third countries and private investment.

High-performance computing is key to the digitisation of industry and the data economy. Its many practical applications will provide benefits to a wide range of industrial and business sectors, as well as to users in academia, scientific communities and the public sector.

For more information see press release: [Supercomputers: Council agrees to develop high-tech infrastructure](#)

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 25 June 2018, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory application No 11/c/01/18 (8905/18).
