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## OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3714th Council meeting

### Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

#### Energy issues

Brussels, 24 September 2019

President **Katri Kulmuni**  
Minister for Economic Affairs of Finland

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<sup>1</sup>

- 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.

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **National Energy and Climate Plans**

The Council held an exchange of views on the European Commission's assessment of the draft National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). Ministers focused on how to ensure that the ambition levels of national contributions in the final NECPs will allow the EU-wide 2030 targets to be met.

Delegations widely welcomed the opportunity to discuss the recommendations addressed to the member states in the [Commission's communication on the draft NECPs](#). Ministers outlined the action being taken by their respective member states with a view to submitting the final NECPs by the end of the year. Several delegations announced increased national contributions and ambition in terms of renewable energy and energy efficiency. A number of member states underlined that the availability and accessibility of financing and adequate state aid rules were key to achieving climate neutrality. There was consensus that collaboration among member states and with the Commission was crucial for reaching the EU's collective 2030 targets.

In addition to the NECPs, the discussion also addressed what role the Council should have in the framework of the governance mechanism of the Energy Union. The discussion showed that member states want an active role for the Council, accompanying and monitoring the process of preparing and implementing the NECPs with regard to political questions arising from the governance mechanism. The Presidency indicated that the Council should return to the topic regularly.

The discussion was guided by a background paper prepared by the Presidency which posed two questions:

- (1) What is Member States' progress in addressing ambition gaps that have been identified in their draft national plans in the areas of
  - (a) energy efficiency, and
  - (b) renewable energy?

- (2) As the governance mechanism provided by the Governance Regulation is a novel process, what should be the modalities of the Council's role in this important process to achieve collectively the EU's energy and climate targets for 2030
- (a) before the delivery of the final NECPs, and
  - (b) after the delivery of the final NECPs?

[Presidency background note](#)

[National Energy and Climate Plans \(European Commission\)](#)

[Regulation on the governance of the energy union and climate action \(EUR-Lex\)](#)

### **The energy sector beyond 2030: towards climate neutrality**

The Council held a policy debate on the topic ‘The energy sector beyond 2030: towards climate neutrality’. Ministers exchanged views on ways and means of achieving climate neutrality in the energy sector. The discussion was open and wide-ranging. Ministers highlighted that they attach great importance to the question of how to achieve climate neutrality in energy systems while ensuring the security of supply and stability of those systems.

Many delegations underlined that a major transformation of energy systems will be necessary to move towards carbon neutrality. Support for research and innovation was highlighted as a crucial precondition for developing the necessary technologies, such as better energy storage, smart and more integrated electricity grids, and decarbonised transport. Delegations also mentioned the need to ensure public acceptance and to maintain the competitiveness of the European economy in order to achieve a fair transition.

A video was shown during the debate with messages from business leaders, researchers, NGOs and other stakeholders who are actively contributing to the energy transition. The discussion was part of the ongoing work on the future of the energy sector in a Europe moving towards climate neutrality.

[Presidency background note](#)

[A clean planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy](#)

**Any other business**– ***Security of gas supply***

The Commission informed the Council about the security of gas supply for the upcoming winter (2019-2020). The Commission underlined that the EU is well prepared, with 97 % of gas storage filled. Trilateral talks (EU-Russia-Ukraine) on the future of gas transit through Ukraine were held last week in a positive atmosphere and created the necessary conditions for reaching an agreement before the end of the year. Several member states suggested conducting an EU stress test to ensure full preparedness before winter.

[Information note from the Commission](#)– ***Hydrogen initiative***

The Austrian delegation provided information on the latest developments of the hydrogen initiative. This initiative was launched in September 2018, during the Austrian Presidency, and aims to maximise the potential of sustainable hydrogen to decarbonise the energy system and ensure long-term energy security. The Austrian delegation reported that Sweden was the latest EU member state to sign the declaration.

[Information note from the Austrian delegation](#)[Text of the hydrogen initiative and list of signatories \(pdf\)](#)– ***Energy Charter Treaty modernisation and review***

The Luxembourg delegation raised the matter of the ongoing modernisation and review of the Energy Charter Treaty and called for a greater focus on compliance with the Paris Agreement in the modernisation process.

[Information note from the Luxembourg delegation](#)– ***Implementation of nuclear safety recommendations outlined in the EU peer review report on the Belarus NPP ‘stress tests’***

The Lithuanian delegation informed ministers about the Astravets nuclear power plant in Belarus and the results of the Belarussian ‘stress tests’.

[Information note from the Lithuanian delegation](#)

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **TRANSPORT**

#### **Professional qualifications in inland navigation**

The Council decided to extend the time limit for raising objections to the Commission delegated directive supplementing the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation as regards the standards for competences and corresponding knowledge and skills, for the practical examinations, for the approval of simulators and for medical fitness ([12096/19](#), [11607/19](#) + [ADD 1](#)). The time limit is extended by two months, i.e. until 2 December 2019.

### **HEALTH**

#### **Maximum levels of erucic acid and hydrocyanic acid in certain foodstuffs**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending and correcting regulation (EC) no [1881/2006](#) as regards maximum levels of erucic acid and hydrocyanic acid in certain foodstuffs. ([11256/19 ADD 1](#))

The regulation amends the annex to regulation (EC) no [1881/2006](#) by setting the maximum level of erucic acid, including erucic acid bound in fat, as follows:

- in vegetable oils and fats placed on the market for the final consumer or for use as an ingredient in food, with the exception of camelina oil, mustard oil and borage oil - 20.0 g/kg
- in camelina oil, mustard oil and borage oil - 50.0 g/kg
- in mustard (condiment) - 35.0 g/kg

The regulation also amends the annex to regulation (EC) no [1881/2006](#) by setting the maximum level of hydrocyanic acid, including hydrocyanic acid bound in cyanogenic glycosides, in unprocessed whole, ground, milled, cracked, chopped apricot kernels placed on the market for the final consumer at 20.0 mg/kg.

### **Maximum levels of citrinin in food supplements based on rice fermented with red yeast *Monascus purpureus***

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending regulation (EC) no 1881/2006 as regards maximum levels of citrinin in food supplements based on rice fermented with red yeast *Monascus purpureus*. ([11213/19 ADD1](#))

The regulation amends the annex to regulation (EC) no 1881/2006 by setting the maximum levels of citrinin in food supplements based on rice fermented with red yeast *Monascus purpureus* at 100 µg/kg.

### **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

#### **Authorisation of member states' exemptions under the VAT regime**

The Council adopted three implementing decisions concerning specific exemptions from the general VAT regime.

It authorised:

- Portugal to apply the reverse charge mechanism to certain wood supplies ([11496/19](#), [11424/19](#))
  - Romania to continue to apply the reverse charge mechanism to supplies of certain wood products ([11498/19](#), [11426/19](#))
  - Poland to continue to apply the derogating measures allowing the limitation of the VAT deduction for certain vehicles ([11499/19](#), [11427/19](#))
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