



Council of the European Union

PRESS
EN

BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 18 June 2018

ENVIRONMENT Council

Luxembourg, 25 June 2018

Chair: **Neno Dimov**, Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria

European Commission representatives: Commissioners **Karmenu Vella** and **Miguel Ángel Arias Cañete**

Starting time: 09:30

Environment ministers will hold a policy debate on the **drinking water directive** which will be live streamed. Its main goal is to protect people from the adverse effects of drinking contaminated water. The proposed update to this directive is a direct result of the first ever successful **European citizens' initiative** Right2Water which had collected more than 1.8 million signatures.

The Council will adopt conclusions on delivering the EU action plan for the **circular economy**.

The European Commission will then inform ministers on five regulations it currently proposes on **LIFE, water reuse, single use plastics** and on the **alignment of environmental reporting obligations** (all live streamed). The Commission will also report on the **EU pollinators initiative**.

Further AOB points will be an information from the Swedish delegation on 'Beyond 2020 - a new global deal on chemicals and waste', as well as an information point from the French delegation on obtaining ambitious results at CBD COP 15 in 2020. The Austrian delegation will present the work programme of the incoming presidency.

Over lunch, ministers will hold an informal discussion on the topic "Adaptation in the EU to 2020 and beyond - towards better-mainstreamed policies and funding'.

The afternoon discussions will be dedicated to **climate** and kick off with a live-streamed policy debate on the regulation on **CO2 standards for cars and vans**.

This will be followed by climate-related AOB items: The Commission will present its new legislative proposal on **CO2 standards for heavy-duty vehicles** and it will report on recent international meetings, namely EU for Talanoa, the Ninth Petersberg Climate Dialogue and the Ministerial on Climate Action. The French delegation will inform ministers on a proposal on a Paris Agreement clause in trade agreements.

Press conference: +/- 17h15

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: <https://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/permalink/110017>

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

DRINKING WATER

The Council will start with 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 had collected more than **1.8 million signatures**.

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

The Commission presented its legislative proposal and the accompanying impact assessment to the Council's Working Party on the Environment on 13 February 2018. The Working Party on the Environment held substantive discussions on the proposal and its impact assessment over the course of another six meetings. The policy debate at the Environment Council on 25 June 2018 is intended to provide guidance for further work under the Austrian Presidency.

The Bulgarian Presidency has prepared the following questions to guide the debate:

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 harmonization of hygienic requirements, or should the Member States retain discretion to set stricter requirements under environment legislation?
- If the **harmonization 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?

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

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

DELIVERING THE EU ACTION PLAN FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Council conclusions will be adopted on delivering 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 conclusions intend to provide the Commission with **guidance for the implementation** of this action plan.

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

What is the circular economy?

It is a proposed new model to replace the linear model of economic growth. It aims to reach **sustainable growth** by minimising waste and maintaining the value of products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible.

Considering that many natural resources are finite, a new environmentally and economically sustainable way of using them is needed. As the cost of raw materials constitutes a significant part of production costs, there is room to improve competitiveness by **making the best possible use of resources**. In a circular economy EU businesses will be better protected against scarcity of resources and volatile prices.

This model can create jobs in Europe and boost the EU's competitiveness by creating new business opportunities, promoting innovation to give a competitive advantage and fostering more efficient methods of production and consumption. At the same time, the transition will reduce the environmental footprint often associated with economic growth.

Delivering on the 2015 circular economy EU action plan

On 16 January 2018, the Commission presented a package aimed at delivering on the 2015 circular economy EU action plan, including a communication entitled "A European strategy for plastics in a circular economy", a communication on "A monitoring framework for the circular economy" as well as a communication on the "Implementation of the circular economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation".

In its **plastics strategy**, the Commission develops a long-term vision of a circular plastics economy with an environmentally and economically sustainable industry that considers recycling requirements already in the design and production phase to address the entire life-cycle of plastics. To get closer to this vision, a number of measures at EU level are envisaged and all stakeholders, from producers to recyclers, as well as civil society and local authorities are called to take clear commitments in line with this approach, supported by efforts towards more sustainable and safer consumption and production patterns.

Working on the objective of a circular economy to re-inject recycled materials into the economy as secondary raw materials implies the need to **identify and trace substances of concern** in materials, products and waste. To this effect, possible conflicts between the legislation governing chemicals, products and waste need to be identified and options how to overcome barriers need to be examined.

On 5 March 2018, the Environment Council held an exchange of views on the package submitted by the Commission, focusing on the plastics strategy and the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation.

In light of the above, at its meeting on 25 June the Council is expected to adopt conclusions on "Delivering on the EU action plan on the circular economy" which will cover the following:

- **Delivering on the circular economy action plan**
- **The European plastics strategy**
- **The interface between chemical, product and waste legislation**
- **Monitoring and follow-up**

[Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy](#)

[\(Annex\) Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy](#)

CO2 STANDARDS FOR CARS AND VANS

Environment ministers will hold a policy debate on the regulation on CO2 emission standards for cars and vans. The Commission presented its proposal in November 2017 and the Council has since been analysing the text at several meetings of the Working Party on the Environment.

Commission proposal

The overall aim of the proposal is to contribute to reaching the EU's 30% reduction target by 2030 (compared to 2005 levels) in the so called non-ETS sectors and to achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement. To this end, the Commission suggests **EU wide CO2 emissions reduction targets** for new passenger cars and vans from 2025 to 2029 and from 2030 compared to the targets for 2021 set by the previous legislation:

- 15 % from 2025 to 2029 for both cars and vans;
- 30 % from 2030 for both cars and vans.

These targets 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 the share of zero- and low-emission vehicles of the manufacturer exceeds certain benchmarks, the manufacturer will be rewarded with less strict CO2 emission targets. From 2025 to 2029 the benchmark is proposed to be 15% and from 2030 onwards, it is proposed to be 30%.

Policy debate at the Council

The presidency has prepared a note providing an overview of discussions so far at Working Party level. Ministers are now invited to provide guidance for further work in relation to the following 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?

Ministers' contributions during the meeting will serve as political guidance for the Council to take discussions forward on this file, with a view to setting out 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.

Presidency note with questions for the policy debate ([9728/18](#))

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Current legislative proposals: LIFE; water reuse; single use plastics; alignment of environmental reporting obligations; CO2 standards for heavy-duty vehicles

Environment ministers will hear presentations by the European Commission on its current legislative proposals in the field of environment and climate action. These presentations will be broadcast live.

[Proposal for a regulation establishing a programme for the environment and climate action \(LIFE\)](#) + [ADD 1](#)

[Proposal for a regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse](#) + [ADD 1](#)

[Proposal for a directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment](#) + [COR 1](#) + [ADD 1](#)

[Proposal for a regulation on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of environment policy](#)

[Proposal for a regulation setting CO2 emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles](#)

Further any other business items

- EU pollinators initiative
 - Information from the Commission ([9744/18](#) + [ADD 1-2](#))
 - Global Pact for the Environment Beyond 2020 - a new global deal on chemicals and waste
 - Information from the Swedish delegation, supported by the Luxembourg delegation ([10104/18](#))
 - Obtaining ambitious results at CBD COP 15 in 2020
 - Information from the French delegation, supported by the Luxembourg delegation ([10120/18](#))
 - Work programme of the incoming Presidency
 - Information from the Austrian delegation
 - Reports on recent international meetings: EU for Talanoa (Brussels, 13 June 2018); Ninth Petersberg Climate Dialogue (Berlin, 17-19 June 2018); Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) (Brussels, 20-21 June 2018)
 - Information from the Commission ([9944/18](#))
 - 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
 - Information from the French delegation ([9837/18](#))
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