



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 28 February 2019

ENVIRONMENT Council

Brussels, 5 March 2019

Chair: **Grațiela Leocadia Gavrilescu**, Romanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment and **Ioan Deneș**, Minister of Waters and Forests

European Commission representative: Commissioner **Karmenu Vella**

Starting time: 9:30

ORDER OF THE ITEMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Environment ministers will have a policy debate on the **strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy (clean planet for all)**. This will be followed by a discussion on the directive on **drinking water** with the aim of reaching a general approach. Both discussions will be broadcast live.

At an informal lunch environment ministers will discuss the **Global Pact on the Environment**.

During the afternoon session ministers will hold an exchange of views on **greening the European Semester**. The Council will also hold a policy debate on the EU framework on **endocrine disruptors**.

Under any other business, the Commission will inform ministers on a new legislative proposal on a global data collection system for fuel oil consumption data in maritime shipping, and on the better enforcement of the EU phase-down for hydrofluorocarbons. The Spanish delegation will inform the Council on environmental protection policies to combat depopulation in rural areas. The Belgian delegation will address the issue of tackling greenhouse gas emissions by aviation pricing. The French, Spanish and Luxembourg delegations will take the floor on the Paris Agreement. The Italian delegation will inform us on the preparations of the upcoming meeting of the Barcelona Convention, whereas the Presidency and the Commission will inform on the outcomes of the recently held meeting of the ESPOO Convention.

Press conference: At the end of the meeting, +/- 18:30

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<https://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/permalink/207314>

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

DRINKING WATER

The Council will have a discussion on the directive on the **quality of water intended for human consumption** (recast), also known as the drinking water directive. The aim of the discussion is to reach agreement on the Council position (general approach).

The quality parameters and approach to monitoring in this directive were determined over 20 years ago. Therefore, one of the main elements of this recast proposal consist of the updating of water quality standards and the introduction of a risk-based approach to the monitoring of water. The proposed update to this directive is also a direct result of the first ever successful **European citizens' initiative** Right2Water which had collected more than **1.8 million signatures**. Consequently, the proposal introduces new obligations to improve access to water and to provide information on water quality and services to consumers. Finally, with a view to remove obstacles still remaining within the single market, the recast proposes to harmonize the standards for products in contact with drinking 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 Environment Council of 25 June 2018 held a policy debate on the proposal at which ministers debated on how best to improve access to water and suggested to set **hygienic requirements for products in contact with drinking water**. Substantive discussions continued at expert level during the Austrian and Romanian Presidencies.

With the aim to provide the best level of protection of human health from the adverse effects of any contamination of drinking water, the current compromise text to be discussed by Ministers on 5 March proposes to set these hygienic requirements through implementing acts. These implementing acts would lay down:

- European positive lists of starting substances or compositions authorized to be used for manufacturing of materials;
- Common methodologies for testing and accepting such substances or compositions;
- Procedures and methods for testing and accepting materials in their final form;
- The procedure for applications to include or remove starting substances and compositions from the European positive lists;
- A marking for products in contact with drinking water indicating conformity with the drinking water directive.

[Policy debate on the drinking water directive at the Environment Council on 25 June 2018](#)

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

CLEAN PLANET FOR ALL

The Council will hold a policy debate on the Communication for a **strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy** which the Commission published on 28 November 2018. The Environment Council had a first exchange of views on the Communication in December. There have also been ministerial discussions in the Energy and Competitiveness Councils, and further sectoral debates are planned in the coming weeks and months. The European Council will address the topic at its meeting on 21 and 22 March where heads of state and government are expected to give political guidance.

On 5 March, the Romanian Presidency will invite ministers to hold a policy debate on the basis of two questions.

Questions for ministers

1. **Based on your evaluation/analysis at national level of the efforts needed to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, which elements of the long-term vision are the most important with regard to the challenges and / or opportunities of the transition to a climate-neutral economy in a socially fair and cost-efficient manner. What kind of policies or tools at EU level could help to address the specific challenges?**
2. **The investments required to achieve the transition will mostly need to come from the private sector. What kind of enabling framework is needed to stimulate the necessary investments, among others in new technologies through research, innovation and development, as well as in education and training, including reskilling and upskilling of the workforce?**

Commission communication

On 28 November 2018, the European Commission presented a strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy ('A Clean Planet for all') in response to the European Council's request in March 2018. The communication sets out the Commission's vision for a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

The Communication aims to demonstrate how the European Union can lead the way by **investing in realistic technological solutions, creating citizen ownership, and better coordinating measures in key areas such as industrial policy, finance and research**. It draws furthermore attention to the need to achieve this by way of a **socially just transition**, by enhancing the EU's competitiveness in global markets and by **creating highly skilled jobs and sustainable growth in Europe**. It also highlights ancillary benefits such as **improvement of air quality and preservation of biodiversity**.

The long-term vision encompasses nearly all relevant policy areas and is consistent with the objective of the Paris Agreement of holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. The Communication does not aim to set any concrete targets for the Union, for example for 2040 or 2050. It does, however, present options and related scenarios for long-term 'climate neutrality', with a view to achieving a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of between 80 % and 100 % by 2050.

Scenarios analysed

The strategy sets out eight different scenarios in line with the Paris Agreement, which can be classified into three categories:

- **80–85 % reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**
Scenarios 1-5 would lead to an 80–85 % reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by means of increased energy efficiency and the use of different innovative technologies.
- **90 % reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**
Scenario 6 would lead to a 90 % reduction by means of a cost-efficient combination of the options laid down in the previous scenarios.
- **100 % reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050**
Scenarios 7 and 8 show that climate neutrality by 2050 could be achieved through more bioenergy and carbon sinks, increased use of carbon capture and storage, an effective circular economy and behavioural changes.

The Communication identifies the main areas where further measures need to be taken, such as energy efficiency and renewables, transport, industry, agriculture and land-use. It also outlines the elements of an enabling framework to support the necessary investments, research and innovation, social and economic transition and international cooperation, and strengthening the role of citizens and the local level.

Next steps

In the course of 2019, **several Council formations will hold extensive policy debates** on the contribution of their respective policy areas to the overall vision.

In parallel, in the first half of 2019, the European Commission intends to take the debate on the necessary deep economic transformation and the profound societal change in an open and inclusive manner to all EU member states. It will encourage national parliaments, business, non-governmental organisations, cities, communities and citizens, including young people, to participate in Citizens' Dialogues. They will discuss the EU's fair contribution to the efficient achievement of the temperature goals laid down in the Paris Agreement in the long term, and identify key building blocks to achieve this transformation.

Furthermore, by 1 January 2020 member states will be required to have developed national long-term 2050 strategies.

The EU-wide debate should enable the EU to present its long-term strategy to the UNFCCC by 2020, as required by the Paris Agreement.

[Presidency note \(6347/19\)](#)

[Exchange of views on the long-term strategy at the Environment Council of 20 December 2018](#)

[Draft agenda of the European Council meeting \(21 and 22 March 2019\)](#)

[Communication from the Commission: A Clean Planet for all. A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy](#)

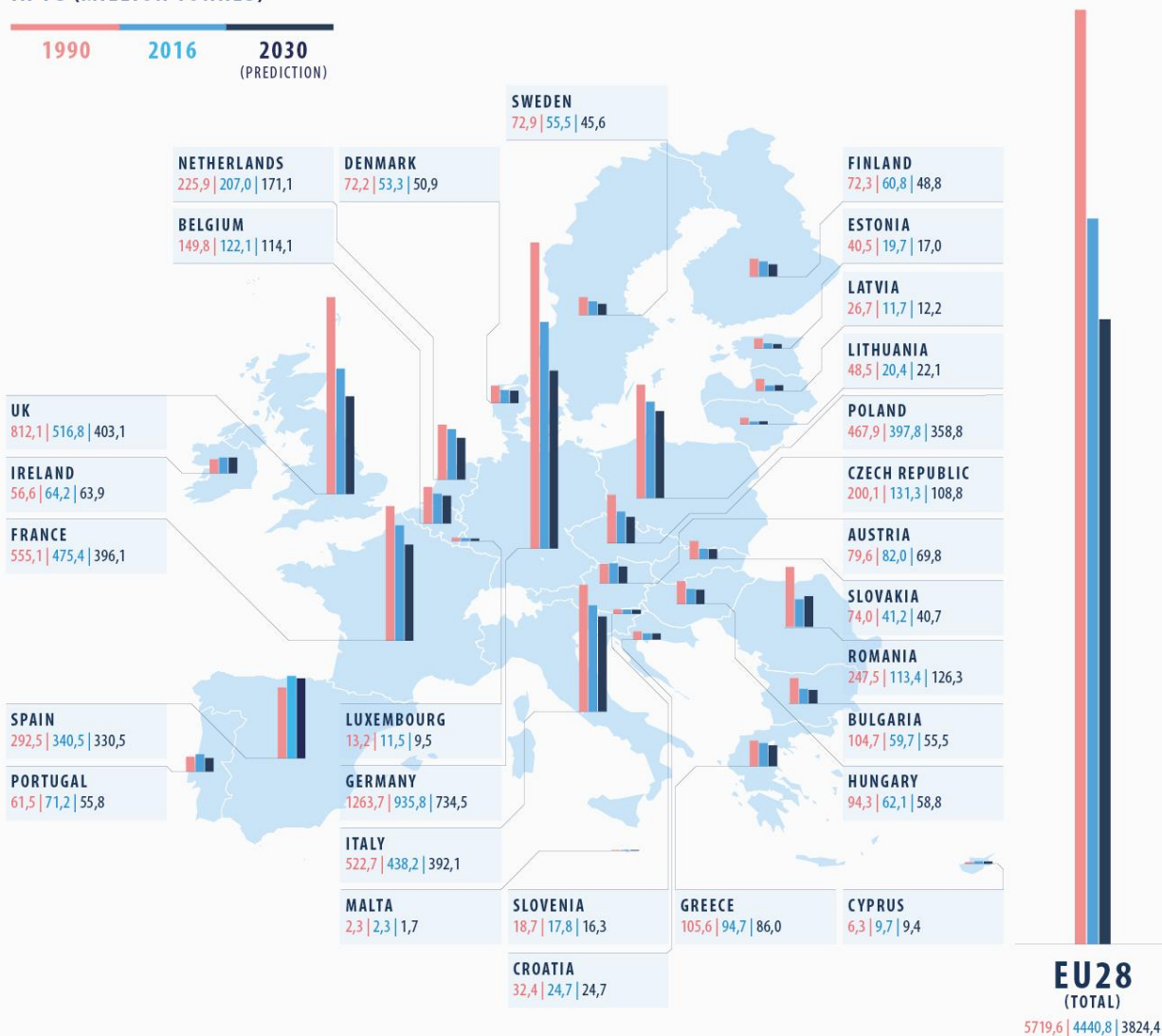
[In-depth analysis accompanying the Communication from the Commission](#)

[Questions and Answers: Long term strategy for Clean Planet for All](#)

[European Council conclusions of 22 March 2018](#)

Greenhouse gas emissions in the EU

IN TG (MILLION TONNES)



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General Secretariat

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ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS

Ministers will have a policy debate on the Commission's communication on the European Union framework on endocrine disruptors. Following recent updates of the legislation on pesticides and biocides to include the specific provisions on endocrine disruptors, this communication aims to **address endocrine disruptors more comprehensively and consistently** in a broader scope of areas.

The policy debate on 5 March is intended to provide political guidance for further work on endocrine disruptors. The Presidency will structure the discussion around two questions.

Questions for ministers

1. **Based on the experience with the application of the EU sectoral chemicals legislation aiming to protect human health and the environment, what in your view is the best approach to develop a coherent EU framework on endocrine disruptors?**
2. **What are the concrete short-term actions that could be taken in order to speed up the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the 7th EAP and the achievement of its objectives?**

Purpose of the initiative

Endocrine disruptors are **chemicals than can interfere with the hormone system**. The concerns of society as regards the adverse effects of endocrine disruptors on health and environment remain high. According to different studies, substances with endocrine disrupting properties have been linked to human health problems, including **infertility, genital malformations, early puberty, obesity, cancer and neurobehavioral disorders**. These substances can be encountered in many commonly-used products, such as cosmetics, toys and textiles.

The scientific knowledge about endocrine disruptors has significantly improved in recent years. At the moment, the regulatory approaches on endocrine disruptors in the EU legislation differ among sectors.

The recently adopted Union legislation governing **pesticides and biocides**, establishes, for the first time, criteria for identifying endocrine disruptors, based on the definition of the World Health Organization. According to this legislation, based on the precautionary principle, **no biocidal or plant protection product containing endocrine-disrupting properties can be authorised** for making available on the market for use by the general public, except when very limited derogation possibilities apply.

Other EU legislation, for instance on **cosmetics, toys and food contact materials**, does not contain any specific provisions on endocrine disruptors and subject them to a general scientific risk assessment and a case-by-case regulatory action based on the general product safety requirements.

The Commission Communication "Towards a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors", adopted on 7 November 2018, aims to provide a follow up to the actions identified by the 7th Environment Action Programme as regards chemicals and in particular endocrine-disrupting substances and commitments undertaken at international level to act on hazardous chemicals.

A number of member states have already developed **national strategies** to address endocrine disruptors amid growing concerns over their negative impacts on health and environment. The Commission Communication is welcomed as leading the way to a European Union Strategy on this important topic

GREENING THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

The European Semester is a unique opportunity to **integrate environmental concerns into broader economic and investment policies**. The mainstreaming of environmental integration in EU policies and activities is an obligation stemming from the Treaties and responds to the ever more pressing need to achieve a sustainable society. Its effectiveness is essential to ensure consistency in EU investments, with a view to **promoting sustainable development and supporting structural reforms**. This is reflected in the European Council conclusions of December 2018, which underline "the need for the Single Market to evolve so that it fully embraces (...) the **transition to a greener economy** and for strengthening the coherence with all related policies".

The Annual Growth Survey 2019 states that well-targeted public and private investment should go hand in hand with a well-designed set of structural reforms so as to ultimately deliver on the EU's objective of **moving towards a low-carbon, circular economy, in support of long-term sustainability**.

It also outlines that investments enhancing environmental sustainability can boost productivity across the economy through **greater resource efficiency and reduced input costs**.

Continued decoupling of energy and resource use from economic growth is needed to achieve the EU's 2030 climate and energy targets, in line with commitments under the Paris Agreement. Therefore, **investing in a low-carbon, circular economy**, including through innovation, is key to Europe remaining globally competitive and raising productivity without compromising living standards.

Finally, the Annual Growth Survey points out that **upgrading transport infrastructure and investing in smart, sustainable and safe mobility**, including zero-emission mobility, remains a challenge in a number of member states. Private investments need to be more fully exploited: regionally integrated networks and local initiatives should be further developed to finance businesses and promote decarbonisation and the transition to a more sustainable economy.

Not least, well-performing public institutions contribute to higher growth and are a precondition for the successful delivery of other reforms.

The ministerial discussion at the Environment Council on 5 March will be summarized in the joint synthesis report to the General Affairs Council with a view to prepare the European Council of 21 and 22 March 2019.

Questions for ministers

1. **How could sustainability be more effectively taken into account in post-2020 investments, in particular those using EU and national budgets? What kind of tools should be developed at national level in order to ensure sustainable investments?**

Background information

The key challenge for the future is to ensure that investments bring social benefits to EU citizens, and do not directly or indirectly damage the environment. This reflects the need to preserve our environment and well-being but also the need to ensure that investments are successful.

The existence of an appropriate strategic framework identifying the measures needed to comply with EU environmental requirements is a key first step which must be carefully framed in the context of shared management policies. In that respect, the national authorities should put in place all relevant mechanisms and tools that can be used by project promoters and authorities providing funding to ensure the sustainability and climate proofing of investments. The national authorities responsible should identify the appropriate measures that can be taken at different stages of project development in order to ensure greener and more resilient investments.

2. How can the transition towards a greener economy be supported through the appropriate environmental/administrative reforms?

Background information

All member states can further improve their environmental administrative capacity. Environmental authorities often lack capacity and resources. This affects the preparation/maturation of the projects and/or their efficient implementation. Poor administrative capacity results in poor capability to develop, assess and implement sustainable investments. Coordination structures across sectoral administrations and at different levels exist in most member states but their effectiveness varies.

Developing tools and ensuring appropriate training of the administration as well as for different stakeholders involved in the process (project developers, environmental consultants, NGOs, etc.) in the use of these tools are key challenges for sustainable investments.

Member states can act together and improve knowledge transfer in order to find the best way to create and implement their own and common projects by greener and more sustainable investments.

The Structural Reform Programme and Support Service should be extensively used in order to design and carry out structural reforms and accompany, in particular, the effective implementation of the proposed enabling conditions.

The reform support could be complemented with technical assistance under the cohesion policy, where the environmental institutions are relevant for the implementation of the policy.

Overall, it is clear that improved governance and coordination can only benefit environmental policy, which has proved weaker when pursued in isolation from the other sectoral or general policies.

[Presidency's note for the exchange of views \(6260/19\)](#)

[Draft agenda of the European Council meeting \(21 and 22 March 2019\)](#)

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2015/757 in order to take appropriate account of the global data collection system for ship fuel oil consumption data
 - Information from the Commission ([6117/19 + ADD1-3](#))
 - Better enforcement of the EU phase-down for hydrofluorocarbons
 - Information from the Commission ([6455/19](#))
 - Environmental protection policies to combat depopulation in rural areas and to improve quality of life
 - Information from the Spanish delegation ([6871/19](#))
 - Preparations of the upcoming meeting of the Barcelona Convention
 - Information from the Italian delegation ([6875/19](#))
 - Outcomes of the recently held meeting of the ESPOO Convention
 - Information from the Presidency and the Commission ([6790/19](#))
 - Tackling greenhouse gas emissions by aviation pricing
 - Information from the Belgian delegation ([6636/19](#))
 - Strengthening coherence between EU free trade agreements and the Paris Agreement on climate change
 - Information from French, Spanish and Luxembourg delegations
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