



Council of the European Union

PRESS
EN

BACKGROUND BRIEF¹
Brussels, 22 October 2020

Environment Council

Luxembourg, 23 October 2020

Chair: **Svenja Schulze**, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany

European Commission representatives: Executive Vice-President of the Commission **Frans Timmermans** and Commissioner **Virginijus Sinkevičius**

Starting time: 09:30

The Environment Council will begin with a discussion, in public session, on the **European climate law**. The aim of the discussion is to make as much progress as possible at this stage on this regulation, by aiming to reach a **partial general approach**, pending a decision by the European Council on the updated EU 2030 climate target.

This will be followed by climate-related AOB items. The Polish delegation will present its proposal for improvements to the **EU emissions trading system** to drive the transformation towards climate neutrality in the EU. The Netherlands delegation will inform ministers on the **climate adaptation summit** which is scheduled for 25 January 2021.

In the afternoon, in public session the Council will aim to adopt **conclusions on biodiversity**.

Under any other business, the European Commission will present its communication on the **EU chemicals strategy for sustainability**, its communication on **access to justice in environmental matters** in member states, its current legislative proposal for a regulation amending the **Aarhus regulation** as well as its decision on the **8th environment action programme** to ministers.

Finally, the Lithuanian delegation will inform ministers on the eighth session of the meeting of the parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (**Espoo MOP-8**) which is set to take place in Vilnius from 8 to 11 December 2020. The Netherlands delegation will inform ministers on the **World circular economy forum** which is scheduled for 15 April 2021.

Press conference: at the end of the meeting, +/- 18.30

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[Environment Council meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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

European climate law

In public session, the Council will have a discussion on the proposal for a regulation on the European climate law. The proposal is part of the actions announced in the Commission's European Green Deal Communication, and **aims to establish in legislation the objective of a climate neutral EU**, which was endorsed by the European Council in its conclusions of 12 December 2019.

The Commission presented its initial proposal to ministers at the Environment Council on 5 March 2020. Discussions started at technical level during the Croatian Presidency and have continued under the German Presidency, including more recently on the amended proposal. Delegations have also examined the impact assessment accompanying the communication on the 2030 climate target plan.

The **European Council discussed** the EU's 2030 climate ambition at its meeting on 15-16 October 2020. In its conclusions, it indicated that it would return to the issue at its December 2020 meeting with a view to agreeing a new emissions reduction target for 2030. The European Council also invited the Council to take work on this agenda forward.

The aim of the discussion of Environment Ministers at their meeting on 23 October is therefore to **make as much progress as possible** at this stage on the European climate law regulation, by **aiming to reach a partial general approach**.

On 12 December 2019, the **European Council endorsed the objective of EU climate neutrality by 2050**, in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The European Council recognised the need for an enabling framework benefiting all member states to ensure a cost-effective, just, socially balanced and fair transition. It called for all relevant EU legislation and policies to be consistent with and to contribute to the climate neutrality objective while respecting a level playing field, and highlighted, inter alia, the role of research, development and innovation policies, the need for significant investments, for ensuring energy security and for preserving the EU's competitiveness.

Building a **climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe** is one of the four main priorities of the EU's **Strategic Agenda** for 2019-2024, which was agreed by the European Council on 20 June 2019. Ensuring that EU policies are consistent with the Paris Agreement was identified as one of the priority actions under this pillar, together with creating an effective circular economy, improving the environment, fighting the loss of biodiversity and preserving environmental systems. The Strategic Agenda recognises that the success of the green transition will depend on significant mobilisation of private and public investments, and that the transition must be taken forward in an inclusive manner, making sure no-one is left behind. Furthermore, the Strategic Agenda highlights the need to promote sustainable development and implement the 2030 Agenda.

[Draft partial general approach 12083/20](#)

European Council conclusions, 15-16 October 2020 ([press release, 16 October 2020](#))

European Council conclusions, 12 December 2019 ([press release, 12 December 2019](#))

[Strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019](#)

[Amended proposal for a European climate law by the European Commission](#)

[Original proposal for a European climate law by the European Commission](#)

[Commission communication on 'Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition'+ \[ADD 1\]\(#\), \[ADD 2\]\(#\), \[ADD3\]\(#\), \[ADD 4\]\(#\)](#)

Climate change: What the EU is doing ([background information](#))

Biodiversity

Environment ministers will have a discussion, in public session, on the need for urgent action to protect biodiversity with the aim of adopting conclusions.

The conclusions come as a response to the communication "EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives" which the Commission transmitted to the Council on 25 May 2020. The communication is one of the central elements of the Green Deal. It aims at protecting and restoring Europe's biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems which is key to **boost resilience of the EU economy and societies to future threats such as climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks**. To this end the communication includes a number of commitments on nature protection and restoration, a new robust biodiversity governance framework and an ambitious EU global action on biodiversity.

[Commission communication on the "EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives" + ADD 1](#)

UN Biodiversity Summit: Council sends a united signal to step up global ambition for biodiversity ([press release, 21 September 2020](#))

Biodiversity - Council adopts conclusions ([press release, 19 December 2019](#))

[Strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019](#)

Biodiversity: how the EU protects nature ([background information](#))

Any other business

Environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context (Espoo MOP-8)

The Lithuanian delegation will inform ministers on the eighth session of the meeting of the parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo MOP-8) which is set to take place in Vilnius from 8 to 11 December 2020.

[Information from the Lithuanian delegation](#)

Proposal for a reform of the EU ETS

In public session, the Polish delegation will present its proposal for improvements to the EU emissions trading system to drive transformation towards climate neutrality in the EU.

[Information from the Polish delegation](#)

Communication on the EU chemicals strategy for sustainability

In public session, the Commission will present its communication on the EU chemicals strategy for sustainability to ministers.

[Information from the Commission](#)

Access to justice in environmental matters: communication on access to justice in member states

In public session, the Commission will present its communication on access to justice in environmental matters in member states to ministers.

[Information from the Commission](#)

Access to justice in environmental matters: regulation amending the Aarhus regulation

In public session, the Commission will present this current legislative proposal for a regulation amending the Aarhus regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 to ministers.

[Information from the Commission](#)

8th environment action programme

In public session, the Commission will present its decision on the 8th environment action programme to ministers.

[Information from the Commission](#)

Climate adaptation summit (CAS 2021)

In public session, the Netherlands delegation will inform ministers on this summit which is scheduled for 25 January 2021.

[Information from the Netherlands delegation](#)

World circular economy forum high-level meeting on the circular economy, Climate Nexus (WCEF+climate)

In public session, the Netherlands delegation will inform ministers on this event which is scheduled for 15 April 2021.

[Information from the Netherlands delegation](#)