



## **ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL**

### **Brussels, 16 December 2015**

The meeting will be chaired by **Carole Dieschbourg**, Luxembourg Minister for Environment. The Commission will be represented by Commissioners **Karmenu Vella**, **Miguel Arias Cañete** and **Maroš Šefčovič**.

Starting at 10:00, ministers are expected to adopt conclusions on the mid-term review of the **EU biodiversity strategy** to 2020. They will discuss the remaining challenges related to the implementation of the strategy. The Council will also aim at reaching a general approach on the proposal for a directive on the **reduction of national emissions of certain pollutants**, which reviews the current national emission ceilings.

Under any other business, ministers will be informed about the UN climate change conference in Paris (**COP 21**), the state of the **energy union** and the recent package of proposals to promote the **circular economy**. Other issues addressed will be how to improve legislation on **chemical products, medicines** and sustainability, the protection of the **Mediterranean** and how to reduce pollution caused by **consumption on the move**. Finally the incoming presidency of the Netherlands will brief ministers on its **work programme**.

During lunch, the Council will discuss issues related to **real driving emission** tests and **manipulation** of emission control systems.

A **press conference** will take place +/- 13:30

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the 2015 mid-term review of the EU **biodiversity** strategy to 2020. This strategy, set up in May 2011, aims at halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 and at restoring them in so far as feasible. The mid-term review takes stock of progress to meet the objectives by 2020. The Council conclusions will give a political response to this review and point at the areas where further work is needed.

## The EU biodiversity strategy

In May 2011, the EU adopted the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 which lays down the framework for EU action in order to meet the 2020 biodiversity headline target. This target is to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and to restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

The EU biodiversity strategy contains six targets:

- Fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives
- Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services
- Increase the contribution of agriculture and forestry to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity
- Ensure the sustainable use of fisheries resources
- Combat invasive alien species
- Help avert global biodiversity loss

## EU 2050 vision

In the longer term, the aim is that by 2050, EU biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides - its natural capital - are protected, valued and appropriately restored. This is done for the intrinsic value of biodiversity and for its essential contribution to human well-being and economic prosperity, as well as to avoid catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity.

## The 2015 mid-term review

The aim of the review is to take stock of progress in relation to the targets and actions under the EU biodiversity strategy. Identifying gaps in implementation is necessary in order to inform decision-makers of areas in which increased efforts are needed to ensure that the EU meets its biodiversity commitments by 2020.

The 2015 mid-term review consists of a report from the Commission and a more detailed Commission staff working document. Contributions from the member states to the review are compiled in a separate document.

Significant progress has been made in a number of important policy areas such as the revised common fisheries policies, the control and management of invasive alien species, timber regulations and the introduction of biodiversity provisions in bilateral trade agreements.

However, at the current rate of implementation, biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services will continue throughout the EU and globally, eroding natural capital and compromising efforts to achieve sustainable development. The mid-term review shows that the biodiversity targets will only be reached if efforts in relation to implementation and enforcement are accelerated and strengthened.

For more information:

- [EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#)
- [Commission report on the mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#)
- [Interactive presentation of the mid-term review \(BISE\)](#)
- [Biodiversity information system for Europe \(BISE\)](#)

## Reduction of national emissions of pollutants

Ministers will aim at agreeing on a **general approach** for the proposal for a directive on the reduction of **national emissions of certain pollutants** (NEC Directive).

### New national caps on pollutants

This proposed directive reviews the existing requirements on the annual capping of national emissions of air pollutants in the previous NEC directive (Directive 2001/81/EC). It establishes **new national reduction commitments applicable from 2020 and 2030**. Limits apply for the **four pollutants covered** in the previous directive: sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), volatile organic compounds (NMVOC) and ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>). The Commission also proposes to introduce caps for **two new pollutants**: fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2,5</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>). Moreover, it proposes intermediate emission levels for the year 2025.

The main aim is to address the remaining **health risks and environmental impacts** posed by air pollution. The directive also intends to align EU law with **international commitments** (following the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol in 2012).

The objective is to move towards the air quality related objectives set out in the 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP) to ensure that by 2020 outdoor air quality in the EU has significantly improved and is closer to the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended levels. Air pollution is the most significant environmental cause of death in the EU, leading to **400 000 premature deaths each year**.

### Timeline and next steps

The Commission presented its proposal as part of the "Air quality package" in December 2013. The Council held two policy debates in June 2014 and in June 2015. The European Parliament voted its position on the proposed directive in October 2015.

The Council's general approach would serve as a basis for negotiations with the European Parliament on this file.

For more information:

- [Preparation for a general approach on a directive to reduce national emissions of pollutants](#)
- [Commission proposal for a directive to reduce national emissions of pollutants](#)
- [Information on the Clean Air Package](#)

## **Any other business**

### **Chemical products: REACH**

Ministers will be informed by the presidency about challenges and options for improving legislation on chemical products (REACH).

[Information note from the from the Presidency](#)

### **Medicines and sustainability**

The Swedish delegation will inform the ministers about sustainable methods of producing and consuming medicine and managing the resulting waste.

[Information note from the Swedish delegation](#)

### **Protection of the Mediterranean: Barcelona Convention**

The Greek delegation will inform the Council about the 19th ordinary meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP19) to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols (Barcelona Convention), which will take place in Athens from 9 to 12 February 2016.

[Note from the Greek delegation](#)

### **Consumption on the move**

The Belgian delegation will make the case for a European deposit scheme and explain how to reduce pollution caused by consumption on the move.

[Note from the Belgian delegation](#)

### **Circular economy**

The Commission will present its package of proposals aiming to promote the circular economy.

[Information on the circular economy package](#) (European Commission)

### **Energy union**

The Commission will present its report on the state of the energy union.

[State of the energy union report](#) (European Commission)

### **Climate change: COP 21**

The Presidency and the Commission will inform the ministers about the UN climate change conference in Paris (COP 21).

[Meeting page of the Paris UN climate change conference](#)

### **Work programme of the incoming presidency**

The Netherlands delegation, which will take over the presidency of the Council from January to June 2016, will brief the ministers on its work programme on environment issues for those six months.

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