

## **ENVIRONMENT Council**

### **Luxembourg, 4 October 2019**

Chair: **Krista Mikkonen**, Minister of Environment and Climate of Finland

European Commission representatives: Commissioner **Karmenu Vella** and Commissioner **Miguel Arias Cañete**.

Starting time: 09:30

The Environment Council will dedicate large parts of its meeting to **climate change**. First, ministers will discuss the upcoming UN climate change conference COP25 in Chile (2-13 December 2019) with the aim of adopting conclusions which set out **the EU position for the conference**. They will then hold a policy debate on the EU's **strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy**. Still before the lunch, the Danish delegation will brief ministers on efforts on the **transition to a fleet of zero emission passenger cars**.

Over lunch, ministers will have an informal discussion on the future of the EU environment and climate policies in the presence of Pascal Canfin, chair of the European Parliament's ENVI Committee.

In the afternoon, the Council aims to adopt a set of conclusions dedicated to the **circular economy**, which will stress that further ambitious efforts are needed to **stimulate a systemic transition to a sustainable society**.

The Council will then discuss the need for an **8th Environment Action Programme** with the aim of adopting conclusions which provide political guidance to the Commission for the EU's environment and climate change policies for the period 2021 - 2030.

Under any other business, the Finnish Presidency will inform ministers on the state of play regarding two current legislative proposals: the regulation on **type approval of motor vehicles** with respect to emissions from light passenger and commercial vehicles (Euro 5 and Euro 6). There will also be an information point on the regulation on a **taxonomy for sustainable finance**.

The Commission will inform ministers about its communication on stepping up EU action to **protect and restore the world's forests**. The Presidency and the Commission will report on COP18 to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (**CITES**).

The Portuguese delegation will update ministers on an upcoming high-level dialogue meeting of the **China-Europe Water Platform** in Guimarães.

All four formal discussions of the Environment Council, as well as all AOB items, will be streamed live.

**Press conference:** at the end of the meeting, +/- 18.00

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[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)  
[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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

## CONCLUSIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE FOR COP25

**EU member states are deeply concerned** at the increasing impact of climate change on the deterioration of global biodiversity and the world's water resources and ecosystems, and at UN reports confirming that Nationally Determined Contributions and current greenhouse gas emission trajectories fall well short of what is required to achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. **Member states recognise the strong calls from civil society and citizens, especially youth, for enhanced action and ambition.**

Environment ministers will have a discussion on climate change with the aim of adopting conclusions which reiterate the **importance of stepping up global climate action**. The conclusions aim at conveying a clear message to the outside world on the EU's determination and commitment to global climate action and give political guidance for the upcoming negotiations at the UN climate conference COP25 in Santiago de Chile (2-13 December 2019).

The conclusions set out **the EU's position at COP25**, and the concrete aims it will pursue at COP25, in particular the finalisation of the rules on voluntary cooperation under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, the completion of the second review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, and making progress on the arrangements under the Enhanced Transparency Framework.

A key objective of the EU at COP25 is to complete the work on the Paris Agreement Work Programme, especially **Article 6**, which was left unresolved at COP24 in Katowice. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement enables parties to cooperate in implementing their nationally determined contributions towards emission reduction. In other words, emission reductions can be transferred between countries and counted towards nationally determined contributions. Article 6 pursues three main goals: raising ambition, supporting sustainable development, and ensuring environmental integrity.

The EU continues to be successful in decoupling its economic growth from its emissions - **from 1990 to 2017 the EU's economy grew by 58%, while total greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 22%**. The EU and its member states are therefore set to overachieve the goal of a 20% GHG reduction domestically by 2020 through existing policies under the EU 2020 climate and energy package.

In 2014 the EU committed itself to reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030, compared with 1990 levels, as its contribution to the Paris Agreement. It is the first major economy in the world to take the lead in the green transition. **The EU is showing the way on the implementation of the Paris Agreement by already having in place an ambitious, binding, legislative framework to deliver on its commitment.** The EU is currently discussing how to achieve climate neutrality.

[Draft Council conclusions](#)

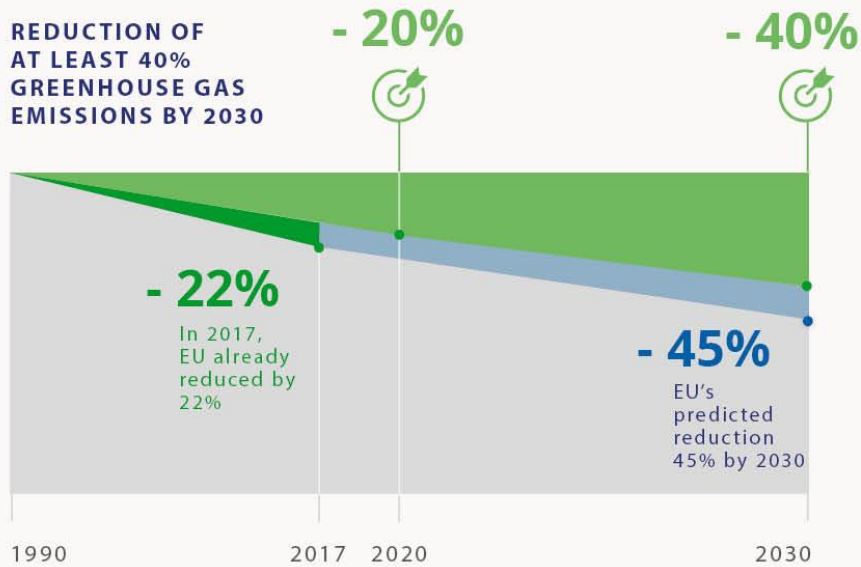
[Strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019](#)

[COP25 website](#)

# Climate change: the EU is delivering on the Paris Agreement

THE COURSE  
IS SET FOR  
**2030**  
TARGET

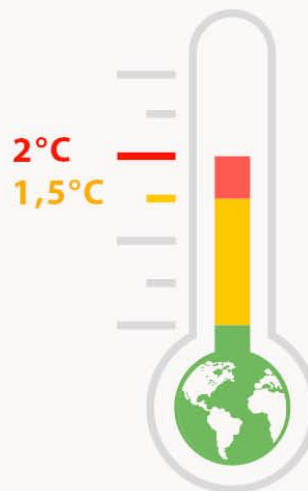
REDUCTION OF  
AT LEAST 40%  
GREENHOUSE GAS  
EMISSIONS BY 2030



## 2050

EU's long-term strategy  
to be submitted by 2020

KEEP GLOBAL  
TEMPERATURE INCREASE  
TO WELL BELOW 2°C AND  
PURSUE EFFORTS  
TO LIMIT TO 1.5°C



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General Secretariat

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## CLIMATE CHANGE - LONG-TERM STRATEGY

The Council will hold a policy debate on the strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy, based on the Commission Communication published on 28 November 2018. **This policy debate at the Environment Council is intended to round up the debates and take stock of the discussions so far.**

The European Council discussed the topic in March and June. In its conclusions of June 2019, it invited the Council and the Commission to **advance work on the conditions, the incentives and the enabling framework** to be put in place so as to ensure a transition to a climate neutral EU in line with the Paris Agreement. It was also noted that for a large majority of Member States, climate neutrality must be achieved by 2050. The European Council also stated that it will finalise its guidance before the end of this year so as to enable the EU to adopt and submit its long-term strategy to the UNFCCC in early 2020.

### Stocktake of work on the long-term strategy

The Environment Council had a first exchange of views on the Communication in December 2018. Since then, there have been several ministerial discussions in sectoral Council formations.

**During the first half of 2019**, in addition to the Environment Council, the Commission Communication was discussed in several Council formations addressing aspects specific to competitiveness, energy, transport, agriculture and forestry, as well as economy and finance. A number of horizontal aspects were raised by member states throughout the discussions, namely the need for a cross-sectoral and holistic approach and a clear policy framework, the acknowledgment of the many opportunities, but also the significant challenges, presented by the transition, and the need to ensure a just and socially balanced transition. Member states agreed that sound enabling conditions must be put in place to support the transition. Some also pointed out that while the transition will require significant investment, inaction would also give rise to significant costs.

**During the second half of 2019**, the Council meetings held on 8 July (Employment and Social Affairs) and 20 September (TTE-Transport) concluded the round of sectoral debates. The transition to a climate neutral economy in the EU was also addressed at the Council meetings and discussions on the environmental and climate aspects of the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy (Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 15 July), on the future of the energy sector beyond 2030 (TTE-Energy Council on 24 September), and on a long-term strategy for sustainable growth (Competitiveness Council on 26-27 September). In addition, discussions related to the transition to climate neutrality have taken place in a number of informal ministerial meetings during the Finnish Presidency.

Work has also continued at technical level during the Finnish Presidency, further contributing to a better understanding of the conditions, incentives and enabling framework to be put in place in order to ensure a transition to climate neutrality in a just and socially balanced manner. More specifically, discussions have focused on the employment and social aspects of transition, as well as the necessary financial instruments and investments in research, development and innovation.

### Summary of discussions at Council level

In the discussions on the EU's long-term transition, member states have underlined that the EU's transformation to a climate neutral economy would bring considerable first-mover advantages in the global context and reinforce the EU's competitiveness. Member states have highlighted the opportunities presented by the transition to a climate neutral EU, while acknowledging that challenges would also need to be overcome. **The transition needs to be cost-effective, just and socially balanced, and the specificities of member states and the role and needs of citizens must be addressed.** To make this transition happen, the EU should make sure that it has in place the necessary incentives and enabling framework, and it must make the best possible use of them. These topics have been thoroughly discussed at political and technical level in order to provide member states with a better understanding of **the EU-level tools needed** to put in place a strategy that will enable the EU to achieve an ambitious long-term transition to a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy.

## Questions for ministers

Against this background, ministers are invited to hold a policy debate on the basis of the following questions:

1. What are the main conditions, incentives and enabling framework that need to be prepared at EU level and be operational in the near-to-medium term and long term in order to achieve climate neutrality in the EU?
2. What EU-level measures and actions, including sectoral ones, should be enhanced to decisively and swiftly contribute to climate neutrality in the EU by 2050?

## 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 also draws 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.

## Next steps

The **European Council** stated on 20 June 2019 that it will **finalise its guidance before the end of this year** so as to enable the EU to adopt and submit its long-term strategy to the UNFCCC in **early 2020**.

[Presidency note](#)

[European Council conclusions of June 2019](#)

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

[Exchange of views on the long-term strategy at the Environment Council of 5 March 2019](#)

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

[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](#)

## CONCLUSIONS ON MORE CIRCULARITY - TRANSITION TO A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

The Council will have a discussion on the circular economy with the aim of adopting comprehensive conclusions. These conclusions aim at giving **political steering towards more ambitious action at EU level**. A particular focus of the conclusions is on key sectors with a high need for comprehensive strategies and targeted actions to address circularity, including from the consumer perspective. The conclusions provide guidance for an ambitious long-term EU strategic framework for a circular economy and a new circular economy action plan, which has already been announced by the Commission to be delivered in the 100 first days after the new Commission has taken up its functions.

In its conclusions, the Council will underline the positive impact of measures to prevent waste, such as the recently adopted **single-use plastics** directive, and will call for more ambitious action. The conclusions will call for actions to promote circularity systematically across the value chain in the key sectors of **construction and demolition, food, textiles, mobility and electronics**. The conclusions will also cover **batteries** and the **plastics sector**. The Council also calls for the adoption of a product policy framework to address further single-use products.

### Circular economy action plan

On 4 March 2019, the Commission presented a report on the implementation of the circular economy action plan that sets out the main achievements regarding the 54 actions under the action plan, which have been completed or are still underway. It also identifies future challenges as the EU's circular economy goals remain far from complete and more progress is needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals and especially the target on sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12). At the same time, the Commission also released a staff working document on an EU product policy framework contributing to the circular economy.

### What is a 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. A circular economy is more sustainable and competitive than the current (linear) model. It introduces measures to cut resource use, reduce waste and boost recycling.

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.

### [Draft Council conclusions](#)

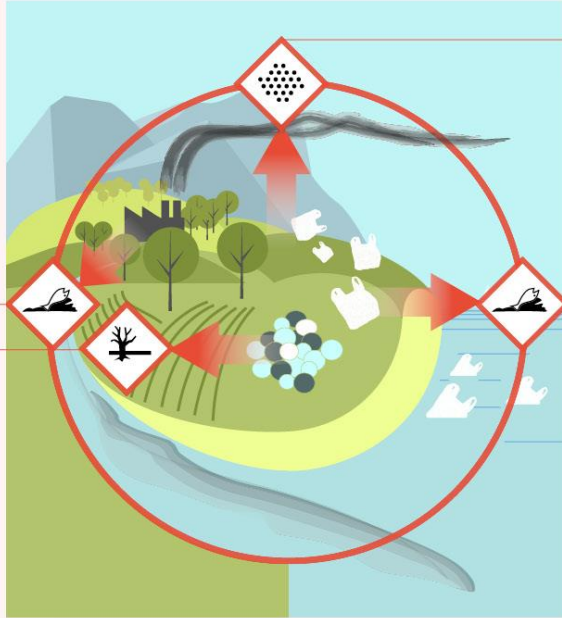
Implementation report on the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan ([7128/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

# Why circular economy?

## WASTE IN TRADITIONAL MODEL

**WATER**  
waste from the factories affects the underground drinking water

**SOIL**  
landfills contaminate soil for farming



**AIR**  
burning waste contaminates air and causes air pollution

**SEA**  
plastic waste goes into the sea water

## MINIMISING WASTE: CIRCULAR ECONOMY

**RESOURCES**  
reducing dependency on import of natural resources from outside the EU



**ECO INNOVATION**  
using products that do not harm the environment

**RECYCLING**  
reinjecting waste back to the economy, via sustainable reuse, recycling, biodegradable waste

**JOBS**  
creating new business opportunities, promoting innovations, boosts EU's competitiveness

## CONCLUSIONS ON AN 8TH ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME

The Council aims to adopt conclusions which provide political guidance for the EU's environment and climate change policies for the period 2021 - 2030.

For more than 40 years, Environment Action Programmes (EAPs) have provided the EU with policy frameworks that deliver results and ensure predictable and coordinated action for Europe's environment and climate change policies. The Council will invite the Commission to submit a proposal for an 8th EAP early 2020. Furthermore, the conclusions will give guidance on the content of the new action programme and reflect member states' priorities, agreed by unanimity, on environment and climate policies.

Ministers will build on the EU's strategic agenda adopted by the European Council on 20 June 2019, which insists on the urgent need to build a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe.

EAPs are agreed jointly by the European Parliament and the Council on the basis of a proposal from the Commission. The 7th EAP entered into force in January 2014. It expressed the commitment of EU institutions, member states, regional and local administrations and other stakeholders to a common agenda until 31 December 2020.

[Draft Council conclusions](#)

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

[7th Environment Action Programme](#)

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

All items under any other business will be streamed live.

### **Regulation on type approval of motor vehicles with respect to emissions from light passenger and commercial vehicles (Euro 5 and Euro 6)**

The Presidency will present the state of play regarding this current legislative proposal, the so-called Real Driving Emissions Regulation. It sets out conformity factors used to assess the compliance of light passenger and commercial vehicles with NOx emission limits, while performing a real driving emission test. The Presidency is bringing this proposal to the attention of ministers to stress the intention to work towards a swift adoption of the proposal. A rapid adoption is important in order to ensure clarity of standards governing emissions that have an impact on air quality. Manufacturers need to have clarity about the applicable rules as soon as possible.

Information from the Presidency ([12509/19](#), [10347/19](#) + [ADD 1](#))

### **Transition to a fleet of zero-emission passenger cars – a necessity for a climate neutral EU by 2050 at the latest**

The Danish delegation will inform ministers on this topic, arguing that Europe needs to consider to phase out petrol and diesel cars in order to support the EU in reaching climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest. It calls for identifying suitable incentives, addressing possible barriers and ensuring alignment of single market rules to support the transition to a fleet of zero-emission vehicles. The Danish delegation proposes to examine possible measures at national and EU level in order to improve the conditions for phasing out petrol and diesel cars, for example stricter CO2 standards, environmental zones, tax incentives, road pricing and supporting infrastructure.

[Information from the Danish delegation, supported by the Luxembourg delegation](#)

## **Regulation on a taxonomy for sustainable finance**

The German, Luxembourg and Austrian delegation will inform on this current legislative proposal. The aim of this regulation is to create an EU-wide classification system, or "taxonomy", which will provide businesses and investors with a common language to identify what economic activities can be considered environmentally sustainable.

[Information from the German, Luxembourg and Austrian delegation](#)

[Commission proposal 9355/18](#)

[Sustainable finance: Council agrees position on a unified EU classification system \(press release, 25/09/2019\)](#)

## **Communication on stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests**

The Commission adopted this communication on 23 July 2019. Its objective is to propose ways to step up EU action to protect the world's forests, in particular primary forests, and regenerate forests in a sustainable and responsible way. The world's forests are in serious danger from deforestation and forest degradation. The disappearance and the degradation of forests has received global attention, most recently due to the rainforest fires in the Amazon. The EU is already working with other countries worldwide to help protect forests and will continue to do so. The Finnish Presidency aims for the adoption of Council conclusions by the Agriculture and Fisheries Council before the end of 2019. To keep the Environment Council informed about the initiative, and given that it covers several policy areas, the Presidency has invited the Commission to present this communication at the Environment Council.

Information from the Commission [11449/1/19 REV 1](#) + [REV1 ADD 2](#) + [REV 1 ADD 3](#)

## **Report on COP 18 to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Geneva, 17-28 August 2019)**

The Presidency and the Commission will inform ministers on this recent meeting. The agenda of the meeting included 57 proposals to bring animal and plant species under the scope of the Convention or to change the level of protection of species already listed. There was a large number of proposals to reinforce monitoring, implementation and enforcement of obligations under the Convention, including initiatives to tackle increased illegal wildlife trade on digital platforms. The COP 18 adopted the CITES strategic vision post-2020 which promotes transformative change in wildlife conservation and management.

[Information from the Presidency and the Commission](#)

## **High-level dialogue meeting of the China-Europe Water Platform (Guimarães, 7-8 November 2019)**

The Portuguese delegation will inform ministers on this upcoming meeting. China and Europe continue to be committed to enhancing cooperation and dialogue, undertaking joint efforts to achieve the water goals within the 2030 Agenda. Recognised as an important cooperation and partnership initiative, the China-Europe Water Platform aims to promote policy dialogue, collaborative research and business cooperation in the field of water. The 7th high-level conference theme will be 'Water and Innovation', including sub-topics such as the ecological security of rivers and drought management in an era of climate change.

[Information from the Portuguese delegation](#)