



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

ENVIRONMENT

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
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COM (2010) 88 – Communication from the European Commission to the Council - An assessment of the link between the IMO Hong Kong Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships, the Basel Convention and the EU waste shipment regulation

Following the Communication of the Commission on an EU strategy for better ship dismantling, the Council invited on 21 October 2009 the Commission to assess the link between the IMO Hong Kong Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships (the "Hong Kong Convention"), the UN Basel Convention and the EU waste shipment regulation, and report back to the Council by 2010, followed by, if appropriate, legislative proposals in line with relevant decisions by the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention and the Hong Kong Convention.

This Communication assesses the link between the three legal instruments as requested by the Council Conclusions, having in mind the importance underlined by Council to ensure complementarity and coherence between different legal provisions related to ship recycling. The Council also referred to the ongoing assessment at international level concerning the level of control and enforcement established by the Basel Convention and the Hong Kong Convention. Taking into consideration such decisions, during a second phase, the Commission may consider appropriate legislative proposals, including measures to implement the Hong Kong Convention. An assessment of environmental, economic and social impacts would be required prior to any proposals for new or amended pieces of EU legislation.

The full Communication can be found here:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0088:FIN:EN:PDF>

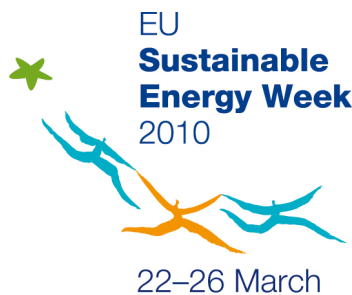


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EU Sustainable Energy Week: Decarbonising our energy

The week starting the 22nd of March was the European Sustainable Energy Week. It focused on decarbonising Europe's energy future. More than 3 500 participants took part in events across Europe.

Mr Günther H. Oettinger, Commissioner responsible for Energy, said : *"Now is the right moment to set out a long term vision for Europe's energy policy, and that vision has to revolve around decarbonisation and green growth. Energy efficiency and renewable energy can be a powerful factor of economic transformation and contribute to a positive, smarter vision for the society of the future."*



Commissioner Oettinger kicked off the event on Tuesday with an opening speech "Europe 2015 and beyond". The European Sustainable Energy Week featured nearly 90 events in Brussels and some 270 energy days across 28 European countries.

The EU Sustainable Energy Week is the high point of a year-long effort undertaken by the over 1,200 organisations and 10,000 people that are involved in the Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign. Launched in 2005 it aims to support the EU targets within the fields of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and clean transport.

For a full list of events in Brussels and across Europe, media highlights and fresh news about the Week, visit EU Sustainable Energy Week's site (www.eusew.eu).

World Water Day 2010: A red letter day for Europe's waters

The 22nd of March was World Water Day, and the Commission joined the UN in calling on governments around the globe to raise the political profile of the importance of water quality. But 22 March is also an important date for water management in Europe, because the day was the deadline for Member States to submit their plans for managing Europe's river basins, as required by the Water Framework Directive. Most Member States are making good progress in delivering these plans, although a small number of States have significantly less progress. A decade after the legislation was adopted, the Commission is reviewing its implementation and envisages, by 2012, a "Blueprint to Safeguard European Waters."



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An integrated approach to water policy

The Water Framework Directive, adopted in 2000, establishes a European framework for the protection of all water bodies in the European Union – rivers, lakes, coastal waters and groundwater – with a view to achieving good quality water resources by 2015. As water systems are often shared by several Member States, the focus is on an integrated approach to river basin management. The Directive contains clear deadlines for the various steps required to move toward sustainable, integrated water management, and by 22 March 2010, Member States were required to deliver their plans for Europe's 110 river basin districts.

Most Member States have made good progress towards the delivery of the plans and have carried out the required public consultation process over the draft plans in the past months. But there are serious delays in a small number of Member States, a situation the Commission will monitor closely with a view to possible legal action.



The Commission will now assess all plans for 110 river basin districts and this analysis will feed into the 2012 'Blueprint to safeguard EU waters', together with a review of the Strategy for Water Scarcity and Droughts and a review of the vulnerability of environmental resources such as water, biodiversity and soil to

climate impacts and man-made pressures.

More information

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/participation/map_mc/map.htm

Commission continues action over levels of fine particle pollution and sulphur dioxide in Member States

The European Commission is pursuing infringement proceedings against five Member States that failed to comply with the EU's air quality standards for dangerous airborne particles known as PM10. These particles, emitted mainly by industry, traffic and domestic heating, can cause asthma, cardiovascular problems, lung cancer and premature death. Slovenia and Sweden are being referred to the European Court of Justice, while final written warnings have been sent to Cyprus, Portugal and Spain. In a separate case, Bulgaria is receiving a final written warning over its failure to control concentration levels of sulphur dioxide.



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The Commission's action follows the entry into force in June 2008 of the new EU Air Quality Directive, which allows Member States to request, under certain conditions and for specific parts of the country, limited extra time to meet the PM10 standard which has been in force since 2005.

At the beginning of 2009, first warning letters were sent to Member States that had by then not submitted notifications or had not notified the Commission about all air quality zones exceeding the limit values for PM10.

Following this warning, most of the Member States involved submitted notifications for a time extension. Slovenia and Sweden did not submit requests for time extensions. As both Member States that had received a final warning in November 2009 continue to exceed the PM10 limit values, the Commission has decided to refer the cases to the European Court of Justice.

Although Cyprus, Portugal and Spain did submit notifications for time extensions, the Commission rejected most of the notified air quality zones on the grounds that they did not meet all the conditions required by the Directive. The Commission has therefore decided to send a final written warning to the three Member States.

The Commission is continuing to adopt decisions on the notifications of time extensions submitted by Member States. Further infringements may be launched if the Commission raises objections to the requests.

Spring European Council 25 and 26 March 2010

The Spring European Council, chaired by its President Herman Van Rompuy, addressed mainly two topics, i.e. the new European strategy for jobs and growth and the follow-up to the Copenhagen conference on climate change.

On climate change, the European Council agreed that it is now necessary to bring a new dynamic to the negotiation and mapped out the next steps. It was agreed that A global and comprehensive legal agreement remains the only effective way to reach the agreed objective of staying below 2°C increase in global temperatures compared to preindustrial levels. On the basis of the conclusions reached by the Council on 15 and 16 March 2010, and taking note of the Commission's communication of 9 March 2010, it is now necessary to bring a new dynamic to the international negotiation process. Among other things, it was decided that the COP-16 in Cancun should at least provide concrete decisions anchoring the Copenhagen Accord to the UN negotiating process and addressing remaining gaps, including as regards adaptation, forestry, technology and monitoring, reporting and verification.



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Apart from this, opportunities for cooperation, including with industrialised partners, need to be exploited in areas such as green technologies and norms and verification techniques. Common interests with emerging countries on issues which could create leverage in the climate change debate should be rapidly identified.

The EU will also strengthen its outreach to third countries. It will do so by addressing climate change at all regional and bilateral meetings, including at summit level, as well as other fora such as the G20. The Presidency and the Commission will engage in active consultations with other partners and rapidly report back to the Council.

See all the Council Conclusions in the following links:

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/113591.pdf

STATEMENT BY THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE EURO AREA:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/113563.pdf