



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

## ENVIRONMENT



03.07.09

### MEUSAC holds the 2nd Environment Sectoral Committee Meeting - *Waste Framework Directive discussed* -



The second Environment Sectoral Committee meeting was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July at Projects House in Floriana. The meeting was attended by members from various NGO's, civil society organisations and political parties including Zminijietna, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Union Haddiema Maghqudin, National Council of Women, Kamra tal-Periti, GRTU, Maltese Islands Agri Federation, Malta Maritimes Law Association and MHRA. The meeting was presented by Mr Kevin Mercieca from MEPA who gave a presentation on the new Waste Framework Directive.

Mr Kevin Mercieca spoke about the timeline of events of the Directive since its adoption, and gave reasons for the need of a revised waste framework directive. He also went on to describe briefly the main amendments that were added to the original directive and an overview of all the chapters included. Mr. Mercieca said that this Directive will also repeal the Directive on Hazardous Waste and the Waste Oils Directive.

After the presentation, the floor was then opened for discussion, whereby members present could comment, ask questions and put forward their opinions on the matter.

Any further comments or questions on the Waste Framework Directive could be forwarded to [contact.unitD@mepa.org.mt](mailto:contact.unitD@mepa.org.mt) or by post to: MEPA, UNIT D, St. Francis Ravelin, Floriana, P.O. Box 200, Marsa, MRS 1000 by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August. **Note: *The Consultation brief and the Presentation are attached to this e-mail.***



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

## Air Quality: Commission decides on conditions for time extensions



The issue of air quality is a major concern for many European citizens. It is also one of the areas in which the European Union has been most active. Since the early 1970s, the EU has been working to improve air quality by controlling emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere, improving fuel quality, and by integrating environmental protection requirements into the transport and energy sectors.

Airborne particles (Particulate Matter 10) are emitted mainly in pollutant emissions from industry, traffic and domestic heating. They can cause asthma, cardiovascular problems, lung cancer and premature death.

EU air quality legislation sets binding limit values and/or indicative target values for the maximum permitted concentrations of certain pollutants in the air. There are two binding air quality limit values for particulate matter (PM 10) based upon daily and annual average concentrations. These entered into force on 1 January 2005.

Directive 2008/50/EC entered into force in 2008 and allows Member States to notify time extensions for PM 10, NO 2 and benzene. Compliance with the limit values may be postponed until 10 June 2011 at the latest for PM 10.

A first decision on time extensions, concerning the Netherlands, was adopted on 7 April 2009. The Commission decided that the conditions for an exemption from the PM 10 limit values were satisfied by all Dutch air quality zones, as well as the conditions for a postponement of the NO 2 limit values until 2015, except for one zone where the extension was set to apply until end 2012.

In January 2009, infringement proceedings were launched against 10 Member States (Estonia, Slovenia, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, Cyprus, Portugal and Poland) that by then had not submitted notifications or had not notified all air quality zones exceeding the limit values for PM 10.

*In Malta, MEPA has finished its first phase of the consultation process on the Air Quality Plan which was launched during MEUSAC's Environment Sectoral Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April and ran through to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, whereby NGO's, constituted bodies and stakeholders presented their positions, opinions and ideas to be included in the Draft. The second phase will now involve the receipt of comments on the draft plan compiled by MEPA.*



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

For more information on Air Quality in Malta please visit MEPA's webpage on Air quality here:

[http://www.mepa.org.mt/index.htm?public\\_consultation/mainpage.htm&1](http://www.mepa.org.mt/index.htm?public_consultation/mainpage.htm&1)

## Swedish Presidency of the EU's Work Programme

As you know, Sweden will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the second half of 2009. The Swedish Presidency's vision is a strong and effective Europe where focus is on the common responsibility to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, including preparedness to manage crises. It seems like that the Swedish presidency will focus its energies into tackling 3 major challenges: the current



economic crisis, unemployment, and the threat of climate change. Presidency is to develop cooperation between different policy areas so that positive economic growth can be combined with reduced burden on the climate and environment. This requires advanced policy instruments, increased innovative capacity and renewal of the European business sector.

### *The Environment Council - Main Aims*

The EU plays a key role in solving cross-border environmental problems and driving global environment efforts forward. An ambitious European environmental policy is vital for global change. The EU must be a force that is active in favour of sustainable development in the world. The Presidency will strengthen EU environmental policy and show that an ambitious environmental policy is a precondition for long-term sustainable growth.

The **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC)** is the core of international climate efforts. The associated Kyoto Protocol contains commitments for emission reductions until the end of 2012. At the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations' Climate Change Convention in Copenhagen in December 2009, decisions will be taken on new commitments for the period after 2012. The EU will assume global leadership of the climate issue. The task of the Presidency, together with the EU Member States and other parties, is to work for the adoption of a new climate agreement during the international climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December. The agreement should include all the countries of the world, reduce emissions so



## Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

that the 'two degrees' goal is within reach, and create the conditions for sustainable economic development.

### *An Eco-efficient Economy*

During the autumn, the ministers responsible for environment, energy and competitiveness from the EU countries will discuss how Europe can be developed into an eco-efficient economy. Committed and energetic environmental efforts give competitive advantages. Converting to an eco-efficient economy means an opportunity for the EU to lift itself out of the economic crisis and could contribute to a long-term development strategy for Europe. The environment ministers will also deal with the environment section of the follow-up of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. The role of cities in sustainable global development will be particularly focused upon.

### *Biodiversity*

Biodiversity is about is the wealth of nature in ecosystems, species and genetic variation. Biodiversity is essential for nature to be able to adapt to changes in habitat, particularly those changes that are caused by human beings. The threats to biodiversity and thus to the ability of nature itself to survive are as complex as ecosystems are ingenious.

The **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** is a global agreement on the preservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The conference of the parties in October 2010 is to evaluate whether the world has succeeded in preventing the loss of biodiversity and formulate a long-term vision for this work. In spring 2010, the EU is to formulate its own vision. The Presidency will take action to ensure that the EU begins discussions on the new global vision and to highlight the key role of ecosystems in people's wellbeing. The Presidency also wishes to draw attention to the positive economic effects of preserving biodiversity, such as the natural ability of lakes to clean waste water, and the costs of not taking initiatives.

### *The Marine Environment*

The seas are by nature international areas requiring cross-border cooperation. The marine environment is affected by EU policy in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, transport and industry. Emissions from agriculture and wastewater systems lead to eutrophication and emissions from industry and waste treatment plants pollute the oceans with chemicals. The situation in the Baltic Sea is particularly serious. Measures to deal with this will be discussed by the environment ministers and others as part of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. The Presidency is also proactive in efforts to identify the Baltic Sea as a special pilot project, with more rapid and stringent environmental protection in implementing the EU marine directives. Particular attention will also be given to the implementation of the EU common maritime policy and the exchange of experience between the different coastal regions of the EU.



**Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee**