



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

ENVIRONMENT



17.04.09

News from the EU Environment Ministers's informal meeting

The issue discussed on the 15th of April by the EU Environment Ministers during the first day of their ongoing informal meeting in Prague was Adaptation to the impacts of Climate Change. Martin Bursik, the EU Environment Council President, Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment said that although Europe is doing as much as it can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, everyone know that mitigation is not enough. He mentioned climate change impacts such as increased occurrence of extreme floods, retreating Alpine glaciers and huge changes in precipitation patterns in Europe. "These effects are going to intensify in the next few decades as we are being warned by scientists throughout the world," Bursik added.

The Ministers agreed that Europe as well as other world regions need a variety of measures to increase the resilience of natural and human systems to the impacts of climate change. "I am not just speaking about building higher dykes. We need to change our whole mindset and integrate adaptation to climate change into all our policies, from agriculture over water and energy to financial insurance. The EU Environment Ministers meeting in Prague shared their own experience with adapting to climate change. Eight Member States (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) have already adopted their National Adaptation Strategies.

The Ministers also welcomed the **White Paper on Adaptation**, recently published by the European Commission, which says that the impacts of climate change will vary by region (with coastal and mountain areas and flood plains being particularly vulnerable). It means inter alia that most adaptation measures will be carried out nationally or regionally.

But for three main reasons the approach should be coordinated. "Firstly, climate change impacts have cross-border effects, for example for river basins. Then we have sectors like agriculture, water management or fishery, which are deeply integrated and for which we have



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common policies. And the third reason is solidarity among EU Member States,” says Environment Council President Bursík.

What's next?

The Prague informal meeting of EU Environment Ministers is the first high-level meeting to discuss adaptation policies within the EU. For the Environment Council at the end of June, the Czech Presidency will prepare draft Council Conclusions to formally round off these discussions and come up with concrete decisions on this issue.

In Malta, the next MEUSAC Core Group meeting that is going to be held on the 24th of April will discuss the **White Paper on Adaptation** which was recently published the European Commission.

Further Reading:

Draft Presidency Paper of the Informal Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment – 14-15 April 2009: <http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=34025&down=yes>

Consultation Note

Public Consultation on the options for new initiative regarding dismantling of ships

The dismantling of end-of-life ships is an issue of international concern: ships from all over the world are dismantled in South Asia in grave environmental and occupational health and safety conditions. Urgent action to improve the situation is needed, also in view of the expected increase of the numbers of ships going for dismantling. It is predicted that in 2010 nearly 800 single hull tankers will have to be dismantled well before the new IMO Convention enters into force. Furthermore, as a consequence of the economic crisis, experts predict that up to 1000 ships/year will be dismantled in 2009-2011. The adoption of legally binding measures is therefore of utmost urgency.

The European Commission is conducting a consultation process with citizens, organisations and public authorities on the matter. To view the consultation page and make your contribution, please follow this link:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/ship_dismantling_en.htm

Public consultation document:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/ships/pdf/Consultation-doc_ship_dismanling.doc

Tel. 2200 3300 Fax 2122 7580 Email: consult.meusac@gov.mt



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Agrifish Sectoral Committee Update

One of the topics discussed at the the first Agrifish Sectoral Committee Meeting which was held on the 9th of April at Projects House, Beltissebh, Floriana was about GMOs, Malta's position and EU developments. Because of its relevance to the Environment sector, below please find excerpts from the minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Martin Seychell (MEPA) did a presentation on the GMO's. The presentation can be accessed by double clicking on this icon:



Mr. Edwin Balzan (UHM) asked whether the farmers that are going to apply with MEPA for permission to start growing GMO's have a timeframe to receive some form of reply.

Mr. Martin Seychell (MEPA) said that there is no specific law as yet. Currently there is only one law that applies to both anyone who wants to sow GMO seeds in fields of Natura 2000 as well as to anyone who want to build a hotel. He said that this tool is not precise enough yet, because of course it matters what kind of cultivation one is undertaking, what kind of plant the farmer wants to grow, if there were any studies conducted with regards to the weather and whether the wind can blow pollen or seeds and into which direction. There is a big difference between pollen and seeds going into the sea or else ending up in a sensitive agricultural area.

Mr. Martin Seychell (MEPA) then said that the applicant has to pay for these studies because the person that is leaving an impact on the environment is obliged to pay. The applicant has to prove that whatever he/she is growing is not going to harm the environment, and it would ultimately be the authority that approves or otherwise the cultivation of GMO's or not. The authority is also obliged to refrain from giving permission to grow GMO's if there is any doubt.

Up until now, there has been no Maltese farmer that has shown interest in growing GMOs because Maltese farming is based on matching supply and demand, and the trend is to invest in quality farming, rather than quantity. Martin Seychell (MEPA) also said that the farmers have to right to label their products GMO free so that they can strengthen the quality value of their products. One must also consider that GMOs have other implications such as economic, social and moral ones.



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Mr. Saviour Vella (PL) asked what type of sanctions exist if someone decides to sow GMO seeds without permission. Martin Seychell (MEPA) said that there are two kinds of sanctions that apply. If someone breaks the Environmental Protection Act, it is considered as a criminal act and there are various penalties that can be applied. Also recently, the EU introduced the Environmental Liability Directive, which Malta has already implemented in its national legislation that states that anyone who causes great damage to the environment (and growing GMO's without permission is included in this), will have to pay for all the expenses incurred. This would be a civil case, so in Malta's case, MEPA would be obliged to take the person that broke the law to court.