

INTERNAL UPDATE 2, 5-9 January 2015

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This week's issues:

News

External

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 5. **Biogas:** Recent Member States and EU decisions
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6. **Horizon 2020:** New Call on Waste: A resource to recycle, reuse and recover raw materials.

News

External

1. Latvia takes over the presidency of the EU Council

The rotating Presidency of the EU council will be held by Latvia for the first time, from January until June 2015. The Baltic state will lead and coordinate Member States' work for the next six months. On 7-8 January, the College of Commissioners travelled to Latvia and discussed the priorities of the Latvian Presidency during a plenary session as well as in several debates. They also met with Ministers and engaged in a dialogue with key stakeholders and Members of the Latvian Parliament.

The Latvian Presidency's programme in the area of environment will be presented on the next ENVI Committee meeting on 21 January by Mr Kaspars Gerhards, Minister of Environment and Regional Development. Mr Guntis Belēvičs Minister of Health will exchange of views with ENVI members in the area of health.

More information:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20141215STO01811/html/Fresh-start-Latvia-takes-over-EU-Council-presidency-for-the-first-time>

2. MEP negotiations on the Circular Economy Package before voting Juncker's Work Program

Negotiations of the Political Parties in the Parliament are going on since 5 until 14 January. The final decision will be known on 15 January, when MEPs are voting to adopt a resolution on the 2015 Work Program proposed by Juncker's team.

Meanwhile, the public hearing for the preparation of the legislative report on the Waste directive programed during the next ENVI Committee meeting on the 22 January will go ahead.

3. Lawyers questioned the legality of the Circular Economy Package Commission's withdrawal

A group of leading environmental lawyers said the legality of the European Commission's decision to axe waste and air quality proposals is questionable and runs counter to the general principle of "loyal cooperation" between EU institutions. They noted that a progressive Clean Air Policy and an efficient Circular Economy Package were among the main objectives set out in the EU's seventh Environmental Action Programme, adopted by the European Parliament and Council in 2013. Commission proposals have to be in line with lawmakers' policy programmes, they added. In addition, lawyers argued that environmental protection is enshrined in the EU treaties and the new Commission's policy of 'better regulation' must respect this aim because "an administrative practice can in no way prevail over Treaty law". Giving up ambitious environmental policies is "counterproductive from an internal market perspective" as the EU would benefit from a common regulatory framework.

Technology and Business

4. Relationship between environmental regulations and economic growth

Researchers at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), constructed the first set of data on environmental strictness and its effect on productivity. The researchers calculated a composite indicator of “environmental policy stringency” (EPS) based on the explicit or implicit price of green policies for 24 OECD countries from 1990 to 2012. Using also a database of EU companies were able to see how changes in the EPS indicator affected manufacturing firms. The results showed that policies everywhere have become stricter since 1990. The strictest are in Nordic countries and the Netherlands, the laxest are in Greece and Ireland while Britain and America are near the OECD average. The study also proves that an increase in stringency of environmental policies does not harm productivity or growth, which can be also confirmed with the positive relationship between strictest environmental policies and highest GDPs for example in Denmark, Netherlands, Norway or Germany. This contradicts what most governments and companies seem to believe, that green rules may only impose economic costs.

Read the full article:

<http://www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21637411-environmental-regulations-may-not-cost-much-governments-and-businesses?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/greentape>

5. Recent Member States and EU decisions on biogas

Denmark will restrict the use of biomass to produce biogas in subsidised plants. From 1 August, plants receiving state aid can use up to 25% energy crops and from 1 August 2018 only 12%. The restriction will apply to crops harvested as a whole for biogas use, meaning waste from agricultural processes will not be included. Germany has already withdrawn subsidies for biogas plants using energy crops and French lawmakers are considering a similar move. The reasons are that energy crops for biogas have been linked to habitat degradation and indirect land-use change emissions.

However, in the EU context, Finnish MEP Nils Torvalds, rapporteur on the ILUC dossier (Indirect Land Use Changes), is pushing for a more favourable regime for advanced biofuels, particularly those using

wood as a feedstock. He asks for a binding 2.5 % target for advanced biofuels, which is much stronger than the Council's position and abandoned provisions agreed by the last European Parliament in relation to the potential impact of advanced biofuel which will be studied in an impact assessment.

European funds for projects

6. Horizon 2020: Waste: A resource to recycle, reuse and recover raw materials.

Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing "Innovation Union", an initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. This research and innovation program has open calls for proposals related to waste. All entities with innovative ideas and solutions on waste are invited to submit proposals before the deadline on 21 April 2015. The topics of eligible projects are:

- Research and Innovation Actions (RIA), with a duration of 36-48 months and a budget of 4-7 M €, finance eco-innovative strategies for waste prevention and management in urban and peri-urban areas including the sustainable use of agricultural waste, co-products and by-products.
- Innovation Actions (IA), with a duration of 30-36 months and budget of 8-10 M €, grants eco-innovative cost- and energy-efficient technologies, processes and/or services for waste prevention, treatment, collection, recycling and recovery of high-grade valuable materials from waste. Proposals should include the participation of industry, including SMEs as far as possible.
- Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), of 12-30 months of duration and a budget of 1,5 M €, look for raw materials partnerships in order to create a common multi-stakeholder platform focused on a limited number of key raw materials across their whole value chain including mining, processing, recycling, application, public sectors and civil society.

More details of the call here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/calls/h2020-waste-2015-two-stage.html>

Conferences, Seminars and Meetings

Internal

Upcoming:

- Joint Meeting WFD and EPR Expert Groups: 16 February in Brussels
- PC meeting: 24 February in Brussels
- Benchmarking experts meeting: 25 February in Brussels
- PC meeting and General Assembly: 12 May in Brussels
- PC meeting: 15 September (tbc)
- PC meeting: 23 November in Brussels
- Seminar: 24 November in Brussels

