



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 11 October 2010

14672/10

ENV 659

NOTE

from: General Secretariat
to: Delegations
Subject: Main environmental events organised by the Belgian Presidency
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find annexed a note from the Presidency on the above topic, to be dealt with under "other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 14 October 2010.

Main environmental events organised by the Belgian Presidency**- Information from the Presidency -****European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) Conference 2010, 4-6 July 2010**

In the framework of the Presidency of the EU, Belgium hosted the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) Conference 2010 (4-6 July 2010). Over 100 sustainable development experts from public administrations in Member States and from civil society organisations attended this conference. The conference aimed to address environmental and social challenges in strategies and activities that link economic growth and sustainable development. Participants were consulted on the added value of the EU-SDS and the timing of a comprehensive review for the EU-SDS. The EU Presidency notes the coherence of the responses emerging from the debates, suggesting broad agreement among the various actors and institutions on:

- the relevance and added value of the EU-SDS as the overarching, cross-cutting and long-term policy strategy with a time horizon of up to 2050.
- the importance of a comprehensive review process to be launched as early as possible, to maximise on the one hand its potential for addressing newly emerging challenges that are currently not yet adequately covered in a cross-sectoral context, and on the other hand its role in the preparation of the EU position for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 and the upcoming PrepComs.

High-level meeting: Biodiversity post-2010 – “Biodiversity in a changing world”, Ghent, Belgium, 8-9 September 2010

The high-level meeting “Biodiversity post-2010 - Biodiversity in a changing world” was organised by the Flemish Minister for the Environment, Nature and Culture, in cooperation with the European Commission and the other Belgian Ministries of the Environment. About 380 delegates from 22 EU Member States, and Norway, Switzerland, Japan and Mexico, and representatives of European and international institutions, stakeholder organisations and scientific bodies attended the conference.

The main objective of the conference was to feed into the preparation of an EU biodiversity strategy for the post-2010 period and to contribute to the EU’s position in the international negotiations on a global biodiversity policy. The conference concluded with a policy message, the so-called ‘Message from Ghent’ for CBD COP 10 in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan.

A specific focus was placed on three thematic areas: Biodiversity in an urbanising Europe; Valuation and benefits of ecosystem services; Ways and means for implementing the vision and targets for biodiversity post-2010.

The event also served as a venue for the official European launch of the “TEEB D2 Report for Local and Regional Policy Makers” of the study on “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” (TEEB).

The Message from Ghent includes six main policy approaches which are vital in order to fulfil the post-2010 strategy: (1) Integration and mainstreaming of biodiversity at several levels; (2) Greater cooperation for sustainable partnerships; (3) More financial resources; (4) Sound scientific research; (5) Communicating and awareness-raising; (6) The European Union’s responsibility.

These conclusions from the conference complement the Council Conclusions on International Biological Diversity of October 2010.

The Message from Ghent and all presentations and conclusions are available at: www.lne.be/en/2010-eu-presidency/events/bio-diversity-post-2010 (www.eutrio.be/biodiversity-changing-world).

High-level event¹ “Towards a regulatory framework for nanomaterials traceability”, Brussels, 14 September 2010

The significant lack of knowledge regarding the characteristics and quantities of nanomaterials that are already on the market make it necessary to address the subject specifically. National compulsory declaration measures are already being taken in France and are being examined in Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, and may lead to a fragmented internal market. Following a High-level conference organised in Brussels on 14 September, the EU Presidency concludes that, in order to protect workers, consumers' health and the environment, and at the same time guarantee the development of a secure and sound economy based notably on innovation and industrial applications that are acceptable to society and create quality jobs, the following actions could be taken:

- (1) draw up coordinated and integrated concrete measures in favour of risk management, information and monitoring. This includes harmonised compulsory databases of nanomaterials (and products containing nanomaterials) for traceability, market surveillance, gaining knowledge for better risk prevention and for the improvement of the legislative framework.
- (2) consider nanotechnology as a priority in a future 2nd Environment and Health Action Plan;
- (3) clarify the various issues to adapt REACH to the nanomaterials and to include effective modifications to REACH in its 2012 review;
- (4) increase public and private resources, especially the financial inputs to the OECD Working Party on Manufactured Nanomaterials;
- (5) regulate more effectively labelling of products containing nanomaterials;
- (6) in order to avoid putting at risk innovation and RTD investments in nanomaterials and nanotechnologies due to safety concerns, establish a systematic, balanced and appropriate link between those investments and the assessment of environment and health risks, early warnings and uncertainties.

Conference ‘Don’t waste your bio-waste’, Brussels, 21 September 2010

Around 200 participants from 20 different Member States attended the conference.

In the opening session the position of the representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) was presented. The agenda allowed for several panel debates and discussions about the communication of the European Commission on bio-waste, about the synergy between recycling and energy recovery and about the importance of the maintenance of soil quality and the organic content of the soil.

¹ The programme, conference presentations, and Presidency conclusions are available at: www.health.belgium.be/eportal/Aboutus/eutrio/environment/Nanomaterials/index.htm?fodnlang=en (www.eutrio.be/towards-regulatory-framework-traceability-nanomaterials).

The following items were addressed during the discussion:

Sustainable management of bio-waste, backed up by an integrated approach, offers some significant benefits. At EU level, it will make a substantial contribution to:

- achieving the aims of the landfill directive: keeping biodegradable waste out of landfills;
- the EU aim of working towards a recycling society.

Such an approach would also support policy in the following areas:

- climate (C-sequestration, renewable energy targets through synergies of recycling and energy recovery);
- soil (C-sequestration, protecting soil quality by using compost or good-quality composted soil);
- agriculture (C-sequestration, the importance of good soil quality linked to the cultivation of, for example, energy crops).

Opinions vary on the legislative approach. The vision of improving the collection and treatment of bio-waste by better implementation of the existing EU legislation, contrasts with the opinion that additional legal drivers are needed for a separate collection with a minimum set of standards for composting.

In any case, the debate needs to be continued.

The conference was related to the priority of the Belgian Presidency: Sustainable Management of Materials.

High-level conference “Product Policy and Indoor Air Quality”, Brussels, 23-24 September 2010

More than 160 participants, from high-level civil servants of the Member States and the European Commission to representatives of industry and civil society, took part.

This event aimed to propose the further development of an effective and coherent (European and national) policy aimed at reducing the impact of products and substances on the quality of indoor air.

The debates thus made it possible for the Presidency to release two work axes for the European level:

1. Establishment of an institutional framework ensuring coordinated and concerted multisectoral policies. Such a framework must allow the construction of European and national strategic policies based on qualitative aims of indoor air guaranteeing an elevated level of health protection. This framework must also be established in coherence with the existing political tools (ex: Reach, Ecodesign Directive, Directive on the energy performance of buildings, Ecolabel regulation, etc.).
2. With this intention, several technical and political obstacles must still be overcome. Thus, the following is requested from the European Commission:
 - To develop at European level reference guide values making it possible to define what is an indoor environment of quality;

- To develop a harmonised methodology of tests making it possible to evaluate the impacts of products by taking into account the various conditions of habitat throughout Europe, aiming in particular to establish product emission categories;
- To draw up a list of priority substances;
- To continue research on the impacts of products on the quality of indoor air, taking into account in particular multiple exposures, and;
- To fix, with immediate effect, the threshold values and/or guide values in products for a series of hazardous substances.

Sustainable methods of production and consumption: the use of environmental LCA tools and social and socio-economic LCA tools - 6 and 7 October 2010, Brussels

An informal meeting brought together Ministers, representatives from national governments, experts from international organisations and various stakeholders.

The meeting noted that changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production was one of the main overarching objectives of sustainable development. In order to achieve this international objective, the meeting recommended the use, at European Union level and in Member States, of two complementary tools: environmental lifecycle analyses and social/socio-economic lifecycle analyses.

List of upcoming conferences

- ‘2010 Conference of the Forum of Judges’, 18-19/10 (Brussels)
- ‘Economic issues of the Water Framework Directive Implementation’, 19-20/10 (Liège)
- ‘The 25th anniversary of the EIA Directive: successes – failures – perspectives’, 18-19/11 (Leuven)
- ‘Adapting to the changing climate: time to intensify efforts’, 23-24/11 (Brussels)
- ‘The role of Trade Unions in a socially fair transition to a low-carbon economy’, 24-25/11/2010 (Marcinelle)
- ‘Towards a 7th Environmental Action Plan’, 25-26/11/2010 (Brussels)
- ‘Sharing Environmental Information’ 29/11-1/12 (Brussels)
- ‘Closing Ceremony Biodiversity’ 14/12/2010 (Marcinelle)
