

Informal Meeting of Ministers for Environment in Horsens 18 – 19 April 2012

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

SESSION I AND II - 7TH ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME.

SESSION III – RIO +20 – INCLUSIVE GREEN ECONOMY ROADMAP – GOALS, TARGETS AND ACTIONS

Presidency conclusions on 7th EAP (Session I and II)

At the informal environment ministers meeting in Horsens the 18th of April 2012 the Environment ministers in light of an expected commission proposal discussed priorities of a 7th Environment Action Programme and the way forward towards a transition to a green economy.

The discussions were based on an outline from the Danish Presidency and a Commission stakeholder consultation paper following up on previous conclusions on the 7th EAP and on resource efficiency by the Environment Council and on the European Council conclusion from March 2012 which called for the rapid implementation of the roadmap to a resource efficient Europe.

The outline for the discussions on the 7th EAP highlights that the current severe economic and financial crises that have struck the EU can not be solved independently of the climate and resource crises, that challenge the well being of Europeans and citizens worldwide. The crises are interlinked and must be solved coherently. No solution of the economic crisis without renewed economic growth and job creation. No economic growth and job creation in Europe without improved competitiveness and no improved competitiveness without a substantial improvement in resource efficiency.

The outline demonstrates how the 7th EAP could contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy while at the same time maintain the primary *raison d'être* of the environment policy to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment, protect human health, ensure the prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources and promote measures at international level to deal with regional and worldwide environmental problems.

The outline presents proposals for the way forward towards a green economy that should be addressed in the 7th EAP in areas where mature environment policies and legislation already exist and in areas of specific importance for the transformation of the economy.

In the discussion among the environment ministers there was a strong common understanding that the 7th EAP should identify priorities, objectives, credible targets, indicators and actions for 2020 setting the course to achieving an ambitious and compelling 2050 vision for a green Europe and a green European economy. The 7th EAP should be an overarching framework for these actions relating to the overall EU policies and strategies.

There was agreement among ministers of the important role and the need for the active participation of all stakeholders in the transformation to a green economy.

There was a general understanding that the 7th EAP should address the global processes aiming at transforming the global economy to a green economy, e.g. the forthcoming Rio+20 conference. An ambitious 7th EAP showing the way towards a green economy would be an important message to the global partners.

Vision and better implementation and strengthening of environment policy and legislation

The vision should build on the 2050 vision set out in the Resource Efficiency Roadmap and the Low-Carbon Roadmap and the primary *raison d'être* of the environment policy to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment, e.g. reflecting the 2050 vision of the EU biodiversity strategy, protect human health, ensure the prudent and rational utilization of natural resources and promote international measures to deal with global environmental problems.

It was highlighted in the discussions that important elements in the ambitious and compelling 2050-vision should be EU as a competitive and resource efficient economy with an absolute decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation, with domestic greenhouse gas emissions in line with the below 2 degrees objective, with a clean and healthy environment, nature and ecosystems, as a basis for the quality of life of the European citizens and integrating environment in to other policy areas.

In the discussion on the 2020 initiatives and actions there was a common understanding that in many policy areas mature environment policies and legislation have been developed and that in these areas the 7th EAP should promote efforts to achieve the objectives set out in existing policies and legislation by improving the way in which they are implemented and enforced.

The communication from the Commission on improving the delivery of benefits from environmental measures was highlighted during the discussions including specific initiatives for better implementation and enforcement such as improvement of structuring and dissemination of environmental knowledge and information systems, improvement of inspection and surveillance and of access to justice, support to networks of environmental professionals, partnerships with Member States on implementation agreements. The importance of involvement of civil society, financing and predictability for business was underlined.

Specific areas for better implementation were emphasised during the discussions such as the EU legislation on air, water, the marine environment, waste, biodiversity, climate and energy and chemicals. The importance of carrying out fitness checks – such as the Water Blue Print - of existing environmental legislation to ensure that it is implementable and fit for purpose and where needed to present reviews were underlined.

Besides the importance of the 7th EAP in promoting better implementation and enforcement of the mature environment policies and legislation there was a general support among ministers that the 7th EAP should address areas where added value could be achieved by developing new environment policies and legislation.

Special areas were highlighted during the discussions such as climate adaptation - including taking stock of the consequences of climate change on water resources and biodiversity and setting 2020-objectives for climate adaptation. Furthermore there was a call for a strategy for how urban environment can contribute to greening the economy, the implementation of the EU biodiversity strategy and a beyond Reach strategy for a toxic-free environment addressing combination effects of chemicals and safety concerns related to endocrine disruptors and nano-materials was highlighted.

Transforming the economy to a Green Economy

In the discussions among ministers on the way forward regarding transforming the economy there was a common understanding that significant ecological and economic challenges exist in relation to the changes in global consumption and production patterns and that the 7th EAP should address the great potential in transforming the economy into a green European economy characterized by increased competitiveness and sustainable, resource efficient, circular and low carbon growth.

Specific initiatives were highlighted during the discussion including the need for setting concrete, measurable, smart and realistic 2020-targets for resource efficiency and decoupling of key resources for instance for water, raw materials, land as well as for consumption and production clusters as stated in the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe.

Environment ministers supported the huge potential in developing a Single Market for Sustainable Growth that will help the transformation towards a green economy through resource efficiency requirements for products, promotion of sustainable products and boosting sustainable consumption and production patterns. A number of initiatives were highlighted in the discussion, including correcting market failures, phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies, taking the product policy forward, implementing and further developing the approach set out in the Eco-Innovation Action Plan and developing incentives and targets for Green Public Procurement while at the same time working to increase green private procurement.

Environment ministers generally supported that the potentials of a circular economy should be addressed in the 7th EAP. Specific initiatives were called for including setting targets for resource use and waste reduction, stimulating the secondary materials market and demand for recycled materials and stimulating the move towards an economy based on re-use and recycling.

Environment ministers had the common understanding that developing measures to integrate and promote a greening of investment patterns is essential for a transition to a green economy. A number of specific initiatives were called for including integration of resource efficiency considerations in the environmental impact assessment in a way that is implementable, mainstreaming climate action into relevant policies and integrating environmental externalities into national accounting.

SESSION III Rio+20 Presidency Conclusions

Inclusive Green Economy Roadmap – goals, targets and actions

At the informal environment ministers meeting in Horsens 19 April 2012 the Environment ministers discussed the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will take place in Rio in June (Rio+20), and considered which concrete proposals for goals and targets the EU and its Member States could come forward with in the Rio+20 negotiation process.

The discussions were based on suggestions from the Commission responding to the invitation in the Council Conclusions from 9 March 2012: "...based on the Conclusions of the European Council of 1-2 March 2012, as a matter of urgency to present proposals for clear operational targets and concrete actions with agreed timeframes in areas directly related to the transition towards an inclusive green economy...., such as sustainable energy, water, sustainable land management and ecosystems, oceans and resource efficiency, in particular waste, to be proposed by the EU and its Member States in the Rio negotiations with a view to an ambitious and focused outcome".

An inclusive green economy is a vehicle for achieving sustainable development. It offers opportunities for all countries for generating economic growth, for creating new jobs and for eradicating poverty, whilst maintaining the natural resource base that our economies depend on.

National circumstances differ, and therefore there is 'no one size fits all' when it comes to implementing inclusive, green economy measures. However, there are a number of key areas that have to be tackled at international level. A global inclusive green economy roadmap with concrete international goals, targets and actions would provide long term and stable direction for the international community's move towards sustainable development and act as beacons for national action.

Some believed that the Commissions suggestions on goals and targets were not sufficient and ambitious enough, for instance on water. Some mentioned other themes and areas for possible goals and targets such as food security, nutrition, gender and sustainable cities.

There was a general understanding that it is a matter of urgency to inject political momentum into the Rio+20 preparatory process and that the EU and its MS have a responsibility and an opportunity to ensure the possibility of a concrete and ambitious outcome of Rio+20. It is high time to move away from rhetorical debates and semantics and to start focusing on substance. It is essential that Rio does not just launch a set of processes but that we have to secure concrete outcomes by agreeing on goals and targets.

There was a general understanding that the importance of the social dimension should be further stressed by the EU, including social equity and poverty eradication; that the five priority areas are not "a closed list"; that the Commissions suggestions are a very good basis for delivering on a clear position on goals and targets; and that the suggestions are not and should not be communicated as a "counter-proposal" to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the contrary, the EU should make clear to our global partners that an inclusive green economy and SDGs can and must go hand-in-hand. The green economy roadmap is a vehicle towards achieving sustainable development and as such also towards achieving SDGs.

In the discussion among the ministers there was a clear understanding that the EU and its MS should present concrete goals and targets in the forthcoming Rio+20 negotiations starting in New York 23 April along the lines suggested by the Commission, It will be made clear to our global partners that the proposals are indicative and illustrative of what kind of goals, targets and actions the EU would like to see agreed upon in Rio.

In parallel to the negotiations in New York, the Presidency will seek a fast track formal endorsement of concrete goals and targets in the five priority areas under the auspices of the Council. To this end, the Presidency urged Member States to be precise and focused.

Furthermore, ministers stressed the link between the inclusive green economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development, including the upgrade of UNEP.

Together with Member States and the Commission, the Presidency will continue to further develop the EUs Rio+20 positions.

Horsens, 19 April 2012.