



Brussels, 19 February 2016
(OR. en)

6252/16

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Implementing the 7th Environment Action Programme
- Information from the Commission on the state of play, requested by
the Belgian delegation

Delegations will find in Annex a note from the Belgian delegation, requesting information from the Commission on the state of play on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 4 March 2016.

Implementing the 7th Environment Action Programme**- Information from the Commission on the state of play, requested by the Belgian delegation -**

Adopted in November 2013, the Seventh Environment Action Programme (“7th EAP”)¹ “Living well within the limits of our planet” provides a strategic and coherent framework for the European environment policy for the period 2014-2020. Its nine priority objectives and its enabling framework are guiding the action of the European institutions and Member States that share the responsibility of its implementation.

Like its predecessors, the 7th EAP has demonstrated its relevance. Over the last two years, several initiatives have been tabled to deliver on the programme’s intended benefits: the amended Environment Impact Assessment Directive; the Directive on Medium Combustion Plants, the Directive on National Emission Ceilings (currently being reviewed), the Circular Economy Package which includes revised legislative proposals on waste, etc.

Nevertheless, the assessment report of the European Environment Agency (“The European environment: State and outlook 2015”²) reminds us that despite significant results showing an improvement in the quality of the environment in the Union, major and complex challenges remain to achieve the 7th EAP 2050 vision. This report addresses three of the nine objectives of the 7th EAP.

For the first objective, it notes that while improvements have been observed as far as the quality of air and water is concerned, the European natural capital has not yet been protected, conserved and enhanced as mentioned in the 7th EAP. Concerns remain notably for loss of soil functions, land degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity.

¹ Decision n°1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 ‘Living well, within the limits of our planet’

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>

According to the report of the European Environment Agency, short-term trends are more encouraging in order to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy (2nd objective). European greenhouse gas emissions have decreased. Emissions of pollutant from transport and industry have lowered. The EU's total resource use has declined by 19% since 2007. Quantity of waste has decreased, while recycling rates have improved. It remains however to be seen whether these trends will be lasting and sufficient on the long-term to achieve the 7th EAP 2050 vision.

Finally, as far as the third objective is concerned, the 2015 European environment - state and outlook report underlines that, despite improvements in the quality of drinking and bathing water in recent decades, growing use of chemicals, air and noise pollution, endocrine disrupting substances continue to raise concern regarding health impacts. Since the publication of the EU Environmental and Health Action Plan, no dedicated environment and health policy has been tabled.

This short state of play regarding three of the nine priority objectives shows that increased efforts are rapidly needed to achieve the 2050 vision described by the 7th EAP.

Recent achievements and remaining challenges should encourage us to strengthen our commitment and our efforts to take further new initiatives to ensure that integrated actions foreseen by the 7th EAP are implemented by 2020 and their benefits are perpetuated beyond.

Therefore, Belgium wishes to invite the Commission:

- to take stock of actions taken in implementing the nine priority objectives of the 7th EAP taking the 2014 baseline;
- to list the objectives and actions that would need further efforts to be implemented by 2020;
- to give an overview of the actions and measures it intends to take in 2016 and 2017 to achieve these objectives.

This request aims to inform the member states, the European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, current and future Presidencies of areas in which increased efforts will be pursued to achieve the objectives of the 7th EAP and to prepare the yearly dialogue between the institutions for the preparation of the commission work programs as foreseen in the new Inter Institutional Agreement.
