

## **BACKGROUND**

Riga, 8 April 2015

### **Informal meeting of Environment and Energy Ministers**

14- 16 April 2015, Riga

#### **INFORMAL MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS**

**The Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for the environment will take place on 14 April.** The meeting will bring together environment and climate ministers from the EU Member States and EFTA countries, the European Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Mr Karmenu Vella, and the Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Mr Miguel Arias Cañete. The meeting will be chaired by the Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia Mr Kaspars Gerhards.

During the first session, ministers will reflect on the challenges of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020 and stopping the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU. Natural capital, i.e. biodiversity (including ecosystems), provides essential goods and services and is an important pillar for the well-being of society and the economy. This discussion is essential in view of the upcoming mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and other processes related to policy review and planning.

The ministerial discussions will be largely based on the results of the new State of the Environment Report (SOER2015). The report concludes that Europe's natural capital is continuing to erode. Also, the information provided by Member States for the State of Nature in Europe assessment shows that the EU is not on track to meet its headline biodiversity target by 2020.

During the working lunch the European Investment Bank will give a presentation on the new Natural Capital Financing Facility and other innovative financial instruments.

The first afternoon session will focus on challenges and opportunities for integrating biodiversity in other key policy areas. Ministers will exchange views and share national examples regarding possible policy responses and win-win solutions in which natural capital flows, economic growth and employment reinforce each other.

A session devoted to international climate issues will take place at the end of the day. This aims to take stock of the progress made towards reaching an ambitious, legally binding agreement at the Paris Climate Change Conference. Ministers will exchange views on their vision for the agreement, on the EU's role in advancing negotiations, and on possible high-level engagement in negotiations.

#### **Press conference:**

Tuesday, 14 April at 17:30.

## JOINT SESSION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY MINISTERS

**The joint session of the Environment and Energy ministers will take place on 15 April at 9:30. It will focus on biodiversity protection and renewable energy use.** The meeting will be chaired by the Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, Mr Kaspars Gerhards, and the Minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, Ms Dana Reizniece-Ozola.

In order to reduce energy dependency and to mitigate climate change, the ministers will meet in a joint session to discuss issues relating to biodiversity protection and the use of renewable energy, with the Member States focusing on increasing the use of domestic renewable energy sources. The EU is on its way to reaching a 20% share of renewable energy by 2020, and the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework sets an EU target of at least 27% for the share of renewable energy consumed in the EU in 2030. This will be a binding target at EU level.

However, there are often direct implications on biodiversity and these trade-offs have been recognised. Preserving biodiversity and increasing the resilience of ecosystems should go hand in hand with effectively mitigating climate change, increasing the competitiveness of the economy and increasing energy security for European citizens and companies. Therefore, ministers will discuss how to accommodate preserving biodiversity with increasing the use of renewable energy sources. Ministers will share examples of national approaches to renewable energy policy planning and criteria to guide the nature-friendly development of renewables.

### **Press conference:**

Wednesday, 15 April at 13:30.

## INFORMAL MEETING OF ENERGY MINISTERS

**The afternoon session on 15 April will be for Energy Ministers only and will focus on energy efficiency issues, with particular reference to the heating and cooling sector.** Energy efficiency is one of the five core pillars of the Energy Union, since it helps to reduce energy demand, increase the efficient use of energy resources and ensure a higher level of energy security in the European Union. Energy efficiency in the heating and cooling sector is becoming very important, as almost half of the energy consumed in the EU is used in these sectors. The outcomes of the ministerial discussion will deliver political incentives to the European Commission for the planned Strategy on Heating and Cooling. The discussion will be chaired by the Minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, Dana Reizniece-Ozola.

**On 16 April, Energy Ministers** will discuss regional cooperation in the energy sector. The Heads of State and Government recognised in October 2014 that regional cooperation is of key importance for reaching the EU's short-, medium- and long-term energy policy objectives. The Energy Union Strategy also urges Member States to coordinate and cooperate with their neighbours when developing their energy policies. The Latvian Presidency therefore seeks to intensify the discussions on best practices and obstacles, and on the potential of regional cooperation as a management instrument.

### **Press conference:**

Thursday, 16 April at 14:00.



Latvian Presidency  
of the Council of the  
European Union

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MINISTRY OF ECONOMICS  
REPUBLIC OF LATVIA



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

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The handshakes, doorsteps, tour-de-table and press conferences will be broadcast live on [www.eu2015.lv](http://www.eu2015.lv).

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