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## Introduction

Several decisions are taken with regard to EU Green Deal policies and adjacent domains. Also an important annual stocktaking document was released, monitoring the SDG implementation at European level. In this memo, the latest developments at European policy level with regard to the Green Deal are summarized. In addition, the global perspective on sustainable development is included through the report of the UN Secretary-General: Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals 2020.

## The European Council and the Council of the European Union

A brief update on the latest and upcoming European Council meetings is included. Furthermore, the mainline issues discussed during the latest video conference of the Environment Ministers are summed up.

### *The European Council*

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, the [European Council](#) started negotiations on the European Recovery Package and the Multi Annual Financial Framework (MMF). An extraordinary European Council session is scheduled on 17 and 18 July 2020. The push to make progress or to even reach a deal on both the Recovery Package and the MMF is quite substantial.

### *The Council of the European Union*

The [Council of the European Union's Environment Configuration](#) met on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the Agenda, the contribution of environmental and climate policies to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic was center staged.

The following matters were highlighted: A) The need for policy coherence in the context of the Green Deal, B) The need for adequate resources for the green transition under the recovery plan and the MMF (in this context, many Ministers called for the 'do not harm' principle to be valid for the complete Recovery Package), C) The importance of a biodiversity strategy for the sustainable recovery as well as the need to fully integrate biodiversity into other sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and forestry and to ensure a coherent implementation of EU measures in these fields.

in addition, the incoming German presidency presented its work programme in the area of environment and climate for the second half of 2020. During [an EEAC exclusive online policy briefing](#) Karsten Sach, Director General International and European Policy at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety will provide insight into the Presidency's



agenda, with special emphasis on issues related to climate change and environmental and sustainable development policies.

## The European Parliament

In this part of the memo, information about recently adopted legislation and the main focus of the Parliament's Environmental Committee are included.

### *Taxonomy Regulation*

During its plenary session, the European Parliament adopted the [Taxonomy Regulation](#). The endorsement by the European Parliament follows [the adoption](#) of the text by the Council on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. As set out by the Regulation, the Commission has now launched a [call for applications](#) for members of the Platform on Sustainable Finance. This platform will be an advisory body composed of experts from the private and public sector. The Taxonomy Regulation is now published in the Official Journal of the EU and enters into force on 12 July 2020.

### *The Chemicals Strategy*

The Parliament's [Environment Committee](#) discussed – among other matters – its draft resolution on the Chemicals strategy for sustainability. The European Commission has included the Strategy as one of the main elements of the Green Deal in order to ensure a toxic free environment across the EU. The Commission has announced that it will present the strategy after the summer.

### *National Energy and Climate Plans*

The Committee discussed the progress with regard to the – so called – National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) with Commissioner Simson. The Commissioner stated that on initial analysis it seems that the share of renewable energy in the EU should reach a level above 33%. However, in the context of the crisis and the fall of the renewable energy investments, changes could appear. Furthermore, the ambition gap for energy efficiency has been reduced compared to the draft NECPs, but it remains substantial. According to the Commission's preliminary analysis that would mean a collective ambition gap of 3.0 percentage points for primary energy consumption and 3.2 percentage points for final energy consumption for EU27. More on the NECPs can be found [here](#).

## The European Commission

The annual progress report was launched and the Commission tested the waters by providing a sneak peek in the draft Hydrogen Strategy. In addition, an important decision was taken with regard to fresh water in the EU.

### *Sustainable development in the European Union: Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context, the 2020 edition*

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, Eurostat launched its [monitoring report on Sustainable development in the European Union](#), the 2020 edition. This publication is the fourth of Eurostat's regular reports monitoring progress towards the SDGs in an EU context.



The analysis in this publication builds on the EU SDG indicator set, developed in cooperation with a large number of stakeholders. The indicator set comprises around 100 indicators and is structured along the 17 SDGs. For each SDG, it focuses on aspects that are relevant from an EU perspective.

The monitoring report provides a statistical presentation of trends relating to the SDGs in the EU over the past five years ('short-term') and, when sufficient data were available, over the past 15 years ('long-term'). The indicator trends are described on the basis of a set of specific quantitative rules.

#### *Hydrogen Strategy*

The Commission's Hydrogen Strategy is expected to be launched on July 8<sup>th</sup>. From a [leaked version](#) it seems that the Commission has a "priority focus" on clean hydrogen produced from renewable electricity, but also recognizes the role played by fossil-based hydrogen in the transition, Euractiv reported. The latter is reason for tension. Whereas [an alliance of industries stated to rebel](#) against the version, urging for a more prominent role for fossil-based hydrogen, European Parliamentarians from predominantly the Greens argued that they will not accept money being spent on fossil-based hydrogen.

#### *The EU Water Framework Directive will not be changed*

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Commissioner Sinkevičius announced that the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) — will not be changed. In a statement, the Commissioner confirmed the need to focus on supporting implementation and enforcement "without changing the directive". The decision comes six months after the law was [concluded to be "fit-for-purpose"](#), following a thorough two-year evaluation.

#### *Public consultation*

In the context of Sustainable Finance, the Commission opened a public consultation in preparation of its Delegated directive with regard to the obligation on investment funds to advise clients on social and environmental aspects. [Click here](#) for more information.

#### *European Economic and Social Committee*

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted [an opinion package on the funding of the European Green Deal](#), the EU's roadmap to a sustainable economy. In its opinions, the Committee states that the budgetary allocation for the Green Deal, private and public investment, and the efficiency of the EU coronavirus response are all crucial to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Green Deal. The EESC therefore calls for an adequate budgetary allocation, a comprehensive enabling framework for sustainable investments and a continued EU solidary-based response to the coronavirus.

#### *Other interesting publications and initiatives*

To include the global picture, a brief summary of the UN's Secretary General's report on the SDGs is included. Furthermore, and in the context of the upcoming EEAC Annual Conference, an interesting report on the concept of a just transition is added.

#### *Report of the Secretary-General: Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*

The yearly report of the UN Secretary-General on progress towards the 17 SDGs has been released ahead of the 2020 session of the UN HLPF. [The report](#) draws on the latest available data on the



indicators contained in the global SDG indicator framework as of April 2020. It also highlights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on each SDG.

The 2020 SDG Progress Report finds “continued unevenness of progress” and identifies areas where significant improvement is required. Areas of progress until the end of 2019 included declining global poverty, falling rates of maternal and child mortality, access to electricity for more people, and the development of more national sustainable development policies and signing of international agreements for environmental protection. At the same time, progress was stalled or reversed on the number of people suffering from hunger, the rate of climate change, and increasing inequalities.

The report enumerates impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on groups of people and operations around the world, and how those effects are “imperiling progress” towards the SDGs. It reports that least developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and countries in humanitarian or fragile situations “stand to be hit hardest” due to fragile health systems, limited social protection coverage, limited financial and other resources, vulnerability to shocks, and dependence on international trade.

*[Seven principles to realize a just transition to a low-carbon economy](#)*

This [report](#) presents basic doctrines that define a just transition. It suggests ways to implement these components into policy and practice. The report emphasizes that regions facing decarbonization can and must prepare for inevitable change on the horizon with critical investments, policy reforms and inclusive dialogue. The report is especially interesting in the context of the upcoming EEAC Annual Conference.