

# EU Institutions Bulletin

## (February 2018 – March 2018)

*Edited by Stefania MINESTRINI (stefania.minestrini@eea.europa.eu)*

- I. Main decisions/actions/communications by the EU Institutions
  - European Commission
  - European Parliament
  - Council (of Ministers) of the European Union
  - EU Agencies
- II. Other Stakeholders
  - NGOs
- III. Issues to look out for
- IV. European Commission releases of ISPRA interest

### I. Main decisions/actions/communications by the EU Institutions

#### European Commission

#### **8 February: Member States to benefit from €98.2 million in investments to improve citizens' quality of life**

The European Commission has approved an investment package of €98.2 million to support Europe's transition to a low-carbon, circular economy under the new [LIFE](#) funding programme for the Environment and Climate Action. The investment package will contribute towards improving the quality of life for European citizens in five areas: [Nature](#), [Water](#), [Air](#), [Waste](#) and [Climate Action](#). The investment covers 10 projects in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Spain and Sweden. The EU funding will mobilise investments leading to an additional €2 billion, as Member States can make use of other EU funding sources, including agricultural, structural and research funds, as well as national funds and private sector investment. A [press release](#) and [annex](#) with details on the 10 projects are available online.

#### **9 February: Commission reports on progress under global commitments for sustainable urban development**

At the [World Urban Forum](#) in Malaysia, the Commission took stock of what was achieved under [the three commitments](#) put forward by the EU and its partners 15 months ago, at the [UN Habitat III conference](#). Significant progress has been achieved under the three commitments; city-to-city cooperation is now flourishing across continents, important steps have been taken towards a single definition of cities at global level and the EU is showing the world the way to sustainable urban development with the ongoing implementation of its [Urban Agenda for the EU](#). The three commitments contribute to the implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Paris Agreement](#). A full press release is available [here](#)

### **13 February: JRC-World's biggest city database shines light on our increasingly urbanised planet**

The JRC has launched a new tool with data on all 10,000 urban centres scattered across the globe. It is the largest and most comprehensive database on cities ever published. <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/worlds-biggest-city-database-shines-light-our-increasingly-urbanised-planet>

### **21 February: College meeting: European Commission reinforces its senior management and President Juncker reorganises his close team - European Commission appoints new Secretary-General**

The College has decided to appoint Martin Selmayr, the current Head of Cabinet of the President, as the new Secretary-General of the Commission. This decision will take effect on 1 March. At the same time, President Juncker has decided that his current Deputy Head of Cabinet, Clara Martinez Alberola, will become his new Head of Cabinet – the first-ever female Head of Cabinet of a Commission President. A full [press release](#) is available online

### **21 February: College meeting: Five new Directors-General and five new Deputy Directors-General for the Juncker Commission**

The European Commission decided on a number of appointments concerning its top management level. Senior management decisions concern key strategic areas of the Juncker Commission's work, ranging from climate action, research, education, youth and culture via social affairs and employment to the Commission's Secretariat-General and the President's Cabinet. A full [press release](#) is available online

The current Directors-General Jos Delbeke (DG Climate Action), Michel Servoz (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and Robert-Jan Smits (DG Research and Innovation) will become *Hors Classe* Advisers in the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC, the Commission's internal think tank), directly advising the President and the College. Mr Servoz will be Senior Adviser for Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of European Labour Law; Mr Delbeke will be Senior Adviser for Relations with the Florence European University Institute

### **5-6 March: European Civil Protection Forum: Civil Protection in a Changing Risk Landscape**

The event brings together the European civil protection community to take stock of common achievements in the disaster risk management field, share best practices and ideas, and discuss ways of addressing new challenges together.

[https://ec.europa.eu/echo/partnerships/civil-protection-partners/civil-protection-forum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/partnerships/civil-protection-partners/civil-protection-forum_en)

### **7 March: European Semester Winter Package: reviewing Member States' progress on their economic and social priorities**

The European Commission published its annual analysis of the economic and social situation in the Member States, including progress in implementing country-specific recommendations and an assessment of possible imbalances. [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-1341\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1341_en.htm)

### **8 March: Sustainable finance: Commission's Action Plan for a greener and cleaner economy**

#### **Key features of the Action Plan**

A year ago, the Commission appointed a High-Level Expert Group on sustainable finance to elaborate a comprehensive set of recommendations for the financial sector to support the transition to the low-carbon economy. Inspired by their final [report](#), the Commission is

proposing an EU strategy on sustainable finance setting out a roadmap for further work and upcoming actions covering all relevant actors in the financial system. These include:

- Establishing a common language for sustainable finance, i.e. a unified **EU classification system – or taxonomy** – to define what is sustainable and identify areas where sustainable investment can make the biggest impact.
- Creating **EU labels** for green financial products on the basis of this EU classification system: this will allow investors to easily identify investments that comply with green or low-carbon criteria.
- Clarifying the **duty of asset managers and institutional investors** to take sustainability into account in the investment process and enhance disclosure requirements.
- Requiring insurance and investment firms to advise clients on the basis of their preferences on sustainability.
- Incorporating **sustainability in prudential requirements**: banks and insurance companies are an important source of external finance for the European economy. The Commission will explore the feasibility of recalibrating capital requirements for banks (the so-called green supporting factor) for sustainable investments, when it is justified from a risk perspective, while ensuring that financial stability is safeguarded.
- Enhancing transparency in **corporate reporting**: we propose to revise the guidelines on non-financial information to further align them with the recommendations of the Financial Stability Board's Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-1404\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1404_en.htm)

## **8 March: Western Mediterranean: a management plan to fortify the fishing sector of the region**

The multi-annual plan is the fourth proposal adopted in line with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), after the Baltic Sea, North Sea and Adriatic Sea. Under the CFP, multi-annual plans should contribute to achieving fishing at sustainable levels. They should also contain measures to implement the landing obligation, technical measures, as well as safeguards for remedial action where needed. [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-1642\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1642_en.htm)

## **European Parliament**

### **5 to 8 February: EP Plenary session**

#### **Votes:**

- Climate: MEPs pass law to cut CO2 emissions and fund low-carbon innovation <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180202IPR97023/climate-meps-pass-law-to-cut-co2-emissions-and-fund-low-carbon-innovation>
- Pesticides: Parliament approves special committee's composition <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180202IPR97034/pesticides-parliament-approves-special-committee-s-composition>
- Clean energy innovation needs a change of mind-set. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180202IPR97028/clean-energy-innovation-needs-a-change-of-mind-set>
- Size of Parliament to shrink after Brexit. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180202IPR97025/size-of-parliament-to-shrink-after-brexit>

### **20 February: ENVI Committee**

- **ENVI News:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/138722/4-envinews-19-20022018.pdf>

## 26-27 February: ENVI Committee meeting

- ENVI News: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/139205/5-envinews-26-27022018.pdf>

## Council (of Ministers) of the European Union

### 5 to 6 February: High-level conference on Eco-Innovation for air quality in Sofia (Event –Bulgarian Presidency)

The Forum examined eco-innovative solutions for improving air quality. It brought together companies and public authorities that have already succeeded in developing and deploying effective new technologies, or innovative business and governance models, with those who are looking for such solutions and practices.

In particular, air pollution originating from energy use, transport and agriculture was addressed. The issue of how to secure financing for eco-innovative solutions was also prominently discussed.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoinnovation2018/1st\\_forum/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoinnovation2018/1st_forum/index_en.html)

### 19 February: Agriculture-Fisheries Council

Link to conclusions: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/agrifish/2018/02/19/>

#### ITEM DEBATED

- **The future of food and farming: Common Agricultural Policy post2020**

Ministers exchanged views on the communication on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). During a public session, the Council focused in particular on the **direct support** that the EU provides to European farmers, the **environmental dimension of the CAP**, and **rural development**. During the debate ministers underlined the **importance of direct payments** and considered that their design could be further improved by making them **fairer, more targeted** and **effective** for farmers across the EU. Ministers also highlighted the contribution of farmers to the protection of the **environment** and the mitigation of **climate change**. They called for a higher environmental ambition of the CAP provided that farmers are adequately rewarded for the provision of these public goods. Finally ministers emphasised the need to maintain **vital and resilient rural areas**, in particular by creating jobs, promoting growth and favouring **generational renewal** in the farming sector. They confirmed the effectiveness of pillar 2 within

### 20 February: Economic and Financial Council

Link to Conclusions: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/ecofin/2018/02/20/>

#### ITEM DEBATED

- **Sustainable Finance**

The chairperson of a group of experts presented recommendations for making the financial system more supportive of sustainable investments.

The Council held an exchange of views, on the basis of an issues note from the presidency.

The EU's sustainable finance strategy will contribute to implementing an agreement reached at the UN's climate change conference in Paris in 2015. It is also part of the EU's plan to develop a capital markets union by the end of 2019.

Summarising the discussion, the presidency noted strong support for a developing a sustainable finance policy at EU level. The policy should be built on a clear legal framework, to be developed in close cooperation with member states and providing a sufficient degree of flexibility.

The presidency noted strong support for prioritising the environmental aspects, whilst financial stability should not be compromised by the new framework.

**The Council asked the Commission to take account of ministers' views in preparing an action plan, to be published on 7 March 2018. The Commission will also present legislative proposals. The Council agreed to adopt conclusions later in spring 2018.**

The group of experts published its report on 31 January 2018. The group was composed of 20 experts from civil society, the finance sector and academia, as well as observers from European and international institutions.

Link to the documents below : <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32854/st06278-en18.pdf>

February 2018 presidency issues note on sustainable finance

January 2018 high-level expert group report on sustainable finance

## **23 February: Informal Meeting**

[Leaders' Agenda note on the next institutional cycle](#)

## **27 February: General Affairs Council (Art. 50)**

### **EU Emissions Trading System reform: Council approves new rules for the period 2021 to 2030**

The EU emissions trading system sets a cap on how much CO2 heavy industry and power stations can emit. The total volume of allowed emissions is distributed to companies as permits which can be traded. ETS is a cornerstone of the EU's policy to combat climate change and its key tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively. Set up in 2005, it is the world's first major carbon market and remains the biggest one. It operates in all 28 EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. ETS limits emissions from more than 11.000 heavy energy-using installations (power stations and industrial plants) and airlines operating between these countries. It covers around 45% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions. Putting a price on carbon and trading it delivers concrete results for the environment: In 2020, emissions from sectors covered by the system will be 21% lower than in 2005. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/02/27/eu-emissions-trading-system-reform-cohttp://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/02/27/eu-emissions-trading-system-reform-council-approves-new-rules-for-the-period-2021-to-2030/>

## **5 March Environment Council**

### **Agenda highlights: Circular Economy, CO2 emissions and air quality, Greening the European Semester**

Link to Conclusions: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/33062/st06799-en18.pdf>

Press statement:

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/vella/announcements/press-statement-environment-council-5-march-2018-brussels\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/vella/announcements/press-statement-environment-council-5-march-2018-brussels_en)

## **EU Agencies**

### **5 March: ECHA -Ten years of REACH: making chemicals safer for consumers, workers and the environment**

For the last 10 years, the key EU law on chemicals ("REACH") has significantly enhanced the protection of human health and the environment and promoted alternatives to animal testing. Building on this, the Commission today proposes actions to further facilitate its implementation. [General Report on the operation of REACH and review of certain elements - Conclusions and Actions](#)

## 5 March: EMA tracking tool: relocation to Amsterdam-Main milestones

[http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en\\_GB/document\\_library/Other/2018/03/WC500244941.pdf](http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Other/2018/03/WC500244941.pdf)

## II. Other Stakeholders

### NGOs

#### European State Forest Association(EUSTAFOR)

EUSTAFOR's seven recommendations to further enhance rural development policy post-2020 – for people, climate and the economy

[https://www.eustafor.eu/uploads/EUSTAFOR\\_Position\\_RuralDevelopment.pdf](https://www.eustafor.eu/uploads/EUSTAFOR_Position_RuralDevelopment.pdf)

## III. Issues to look out for

22 March : High Level Conference- Financing sustainable growth-

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/finance-180322-sustainable-finance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/finance-180322-sustainable-finance_en)

## IV. European Commission's releases of ISPRA interest<sup>1</sup>

Air & Water Quality update - Sometimes you can trust the experts; Commissioner Vella speech [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/vella/blog/air-water-quality-update-sometimes-you-can-trust-experts\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/vella/blog/air-water-quality-update-sometimes-you-can-trust-experts_en)

New study on the Precautionary Principle and Environmental Policies prepared for the European Commission's DG Environment. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/18091262-f4f2-11e7-be11-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

Keynote speech by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič at EU Industry Day - EU industry leadership in the transition to a low carbon society  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-18-1102\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-18-1102_en.htm)

10 years of the Covenant of Mayors: Local and regional leadership for clean energy and climate action. <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/events/covenant-mayors-investment-forum-energy-efficiency-finance-market-place>

Opening speeches by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Bieńkowska at the Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-18-943\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-18-943_en.htm)  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-18-945\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-18-945_en.htm)

Commissioner Vella's speech at the Circular Economy Conference:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/vella/announcements/commissioner-vellas-speech-circular-economy-stakeholder-conference-20-february-2018\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/vella/announcements/commissioner-vellas-speech-circular-economy-stakeholder-conference-20-february-2018_en)

International Women's Day 2018: Women's empowerment matters for the future of Europe  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-1507\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1507_en.htm)

<sup>1</sup> All Commission releases are available on *Europa Newsroom*  
[http://europa.eu/newsroom/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/newsroom/index_en.htm)

JRC Study: Soil erosion costs European farmers €1.25 billion a year.  
<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/soil-erosion-costs-european-farmers-125-billion-year>