

Success for the environment, climate and innovations

Minister Gabriel draws positive balance of EU Presidency

Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel has drawn a positive balance of Germany's EU Presidency: "In the past six months, the European Union has demonstrated its ability to act in the fields of climate and environmental policy. The European Council in March, chaired by the German Chancellor, adopted a historic decision on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and a whole package of specific measures. This package now has to be swiftly translated into national policies. We have also reached our goals regarding the protection of biological diversity and waste policy. Last but not least, we have made a contribution to firmly establishing the concept of ecological industrial policy, which interlinks environment, innovation and employment, in future European policy."

After intensive preparations by the environment ministers, the heads of state and government agreed for the first time on an integrated European climate and energy policy at the March summit. This policy sets specific climate protection goals in order to avoid global warming of more than two degrees Celsius. The EU wants to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent as compared to 1990 levels if other industrialised countries commit to comparable reductions. In this case, according to a decision of the German Bundestag last year, CO₂ emissions in Germany will have to be reduced by 40 per cent. Unilaterally, the Community is already willing to cut emissions by at least 20 per cent. In order to reach these ambitious goals, the heads of state and government want to increase energy efficiency by 20 per cent. At the same time, the share of renewable energies in the EU is to be increased to 20 per cent.

The German Presidency also succeeded in defining policy guidelines for the European strategy to reduce CO₂ emissions from passenger cars. On 28 June in Luxembourg, the Environment Council endorsed the approach proposed by the European Commission: emissions of newly licensed cars in the EU are to be limited to an average of 120g of CO₂/km by 2012. A reduction to 130g will be achieved through improved vehicle technology. The remaining 10g reduction will be accomplished with the help of complementary measures such as the blending of biofuels. This provides a clear incentive for the automotive and mineral oil industries to invest in the industrial generation of synthetic second generation biofuels, which are urgently needed to reduce dependency on oil imports. Regardless of their particular kind of vehicle fleet, all car manufacturers in Europe are explicitly called upon to step up their efforts to reduce average CO₂ emissions of new cars.

The Environment Council on Thursday also reached a political consensus on new legislative acts in three areas: waste, mercury and priority substances. The new Waste Framework Directive introduces clear definitions for waste management and prevents "waste tourism". It also helps to simplify waste legislation. The regulation on mercury includes an export ban and provisions on the safe storage of metallic mercury. The agreement on the Directive on Environmental Quality Standards will help to further specify the Water Framework Directive. The goal is even better protection of European water bodies against major pollutants.

Progress was made on the integration of aviation into emissions trading through agreement on a number of important points. In order to further develop the emissions trading scheme, the

Environment Council calls for greater transparency and a better harmonisation of the scheme, including uniform benchmarks.

Under the heading of "environment, innovation, employment", eco-innovations will be promoted in the framework of an ecological industrial policy in order to make Europe the most energy-efficient and resource-efficient location in the world. The EU environment ministers agreed on concrete proposals for an integrated Community strategy. This includes modern environmental legislation, identification and targeted support of lead markets, greater use of economic instruments and environmentally sound public procurement.

In preparation of the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will take place in Germany in 2008, the Environment Council's conclusions contain ambitious steps for limiting the rapid loss of biodiversity by 2010. Innovative financing mechanisms and a greater involvement of trade and industry will contribute to achieving this goal.

Moreover, the German Presidency succeeded in adopting the financial programme for the environment, LIFE+. This means that considerable funds for environmental protection projects will already be available this year. Agreement was also reached on the Floods Directive, which significantly improves European cooperation.

Further Information:

- [Press Release as at 11.06.2007](#): A fresh start for "LIFE+"
- [Press Release as at 20.02.2007](#): Gabriel: Decision by the Environment Council is a historic step for climate protection