



Brussels, 28 February 2014

BACKGROUND¹
ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL
Monday 3 March in Brussels

*The Council, starting at 11.30, will hold a public policy debate on a Commission communication on "A policy framework for **climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030**".*

*Ministers will exchange views on a draft regulation amending directive 2001/18/EC as regards the possibility for member states to restrict or **prohibit the cultivation of GMOs** in their territory.*

*In addition, ministers will exchange views on **greening the European Semester**, based on this year's annual growth survey.*

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the soil protection in the Union.

Press conference: at the end of the Council (+/- 18.30).

Press conferences and public deliberations: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>

Video coverage: <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu>

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

P R E S S

2030 framework for climate and energy

The Council will hold a public policy debate on a Commission communication for a 2030 framework for climate and energy policy.

To structure the debate, the presidency suggested two questions ([6422/14](#)) addressed to ministers. They will be invited to express their views on the overall approach of the 2030 policy framework and whether it provides the appropriate balance between ambition and flexibility, as well as to discuss the next steps and identify which aspects of the framework need to be further discussed and defined.

The presidency will report on the outcome of the ministerial discussion to the President of the European Council with a view to the European Council meeting of 20-21 March 2014.

The Commission communication ([5644/1/14 REV 1](#)), presented on 22 January, suggests a framework for future EU energy and climate policies and is intended to launch a process to reach a shared understanding of how to take these policies forward in the future.

The main elements of the proposed framework include:

- ✓ a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 40 % below 1990 levels, to be achieved only through domestic measures (without the use of international credits);
- ✓ a renewable energy target of at least 27 % of energy consumption, with flexibility for member states to set national objectives;
- ✓ energy efficiency as a key component of the 2030 framework: a review of the energy efficiency directive will be concluded later in 2014.

The Commission also outlines a new governance system based on national plans for competitive, secure and sustainable energy to be drawn up by member states. In addition, it proposes a set of indicators intended to assess progress over time and to provide a factual base for a potential policy response.

For more information on this topic, see also the Commission [website](#).

Cultivation of genetically modified organisms

The Council will hold a public exchange of views on draft regulation amending directive 2001/18/EC as regards the possibility for member states to restrict or prohibit the cultivation, in all or part of their territory, of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that have been authorised at EU level.

The Hellenic presidency suggested two questions to be addressed by ministers: whether there is common ground to re-open the discussions on this legislative file and whether the presidency compromise proposal constitutes a good basis for further technical work in order to reach a political agreement.

During a policy debate held at the General Affairs Council on a Commission proposal for a Council decision to authorise the placing on the market for cultivation of the genetically modified maize 1507 (see *press release* [6328/14](#), page 7) a significant number of member states expressed willingness to revisit the EU legislative framework governing this kind of authorisation.

The Commission presented the GMO cultivation proposal in July 2010 ([12371/10](#) + [ADD1](#)) with the aim of providing for a legal basis to allow member states to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of GMOs in their territory on grounds other than health and environment considerations, which had already been addressed during the EU authorisation process for GMOs. The proposal has been examined during various presidencies. The Environment Council of 9 March 2012 was not able to reach a political agreement as a blocking minority of delegations still had concerns regarding some issues (see *press release* [7478/12](#), page 11).

Greening the European Semester

Ministers will hold a debate on the Annual Growth Survey 2014, which forms part of all relevant Council deliberations in preparation for the Spring European Council on 20 and 21 March.

The Annual Growth Survey 2014 ([15803/13](#)) was presented in November 2013. It takes stock of the economic and social situation in Europe and sets out broad policy priorities for the EU as a whole for the coming year. The Annual Growth Survey launches a new European Semester of economic policy coordination, ensuring that the EU and its member states coordinate their economic policies and their efforts to promote growth and jobs. In this fourth European Semester of economic policy coordination, the Commission identifies five economic and social priorities:

- ✓ pursuing differentiated, growth-friendly fiscal consolidation;
- ✓ restoring normal lending to the economy;
- ✓ promoting growth and competitiveness;
- ✓ tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis; and
- ✓ modernising public administrations.

The Hellenic presidency proposes to focus the debate of the Environment Council on how to improve the uptake of green economy priorities in national reform programmes and in the overall semester cycle ([6349/14](#)).

With a view to contributing to the March European Council, ministers will be invited to address the following three questions:

- ✓ *In light of the Annual Growth Survey 2014, what do you see as the main bottlenecks to the achievement of the Europe 2020 resource-efficiency and low-carbon objectives?*
- ✓ *In your view, which measures, at national level, in the field of resource efficiency and climate action have the biggest potential to contribute to sustainable growth and job creation, while addressing existing environmental challenges, and could be integrated, as relevant, in the National Reform Programmes for 2014?*
- ✓ *How could the role/involvement of Environment Ministers be strengthened in the various phases of the European Semester cycle?*

The March European Council will assess overall progress made in implementing the 2013 country-specific recommendations and provide guidance to member states on their 2014 Stability and Convergence Programmes and National Reform Programmes for the implementation of the priorities set out in the Commission's Annual Growth Survey and as agreed at the December 2013 European Council ([217/13](#), paragraph 25).

Other business

A clean air programme for Europe

Commission briefing in a public session ([18170/13](#), [18167/13](#), [18165/13](#), [18155/13](#))

Review of the best available techniques reference document for the large combustion plants

Information from the Czech delegation, supported by the Polish and Estonian delegations ([6531/14](#))

The EU approach against wildlife trafficking

Commission briefing ([6351/14](#))

State of play of the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period ratification

Information from the Commission ([7019/14](#))

Recommendation and communication from the Commission on the exploration and production of hydrocarbons using high-volume hydraulic fracturing

Information from the Commission ([5700/14](#), [5706/14](#))
