

Circular Economy: Agreement on Commission proposal to boost the use of organic and waste-based fertilisers

Negotiators from the European Parliament, Council and Commission have reached a preliminary political agreement on the [Commission's proposal from March 2016](#) which built on the Commission's [2015 Circular Economy Action Plan](#).

The new rules will facilitate the access of organic and waste-based fertilisers to the EU Single Market. It also introduces limits for cadmium and other contaminants in phosphate fertilisers. This will help to reduce waste, energy consumption and environmental damage, as well as limit the risks to human health.

Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Unlike traditional fertilisers which are highly energy intensive and rely on scarce natural resources, bio-waste fertilisers have the potential to make farming more sustainable. These new rules will also help to create a new market for reused raw materials in line with our efforts to build a circular economy in Europe."*

Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, added: *"The new EU rules will open up new market opportunities for innovative companies producing organic fertilisers and create new local jobs, provide wider choice for our farmers and protect our soils and food. At the same time we are also making sure that our European industry will be able to adapt to the proposed changes."*

The main elements of the new rules are:

- **Opening the Single Market for organic fertilisers:** The agreement on the Fertilising Products Regulation will open the market for new and innovative organic fertilisers by defining the conditions under which these can access the EU Single Market. The Regulation will provide common rules on safety, quality and labelling requirements for all fertilisers to be traded freely across the EU. Producers will need to demonstrate that their products meet those requirements before affixing the CE mark.
- **Introducing limit values for toxic contaminants in certain fertilisers:** The Regulation for the first time introduces limits for toxic contaminants, including a new 60 mg/kg limit for cadmium which will be further reviewed 4 years after the date of application. This will guarantee a high level of soil protection and reduce health and environmental risks, while allowing producers to adapt their manufacturing process to comply with the new limits. To encourage the use of even safer fertilisers, producers will also be able to use a low-cadmium label applicable to products with less than 20mg/kg cadmium content. These rules will affect those fertilisers that choose to affix

CE marking.

- **Maintaining optional harmonisation:** The Regulation also offers the possibility to opt for optional harmonisation. A manufacturer who does not wish to CE-mark the product can choose to comply with national standards and sell the product to other EU countries based on the principle of mutual recognition.

Next steps

The preliminary political agreement reached by the European Parliament, Council and Commission in so-called triilogue negotiations has today been confirmed by the Member States' representatives and is now subject to formal approval by the European Parliament and Council. The Regulation will then be directly applicable in all Member States and will become mandatory in 2022.

Background:

Under the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission called for a revision of the EU regulation on fertilisers to facilitate the EU-wide recognition of organic and waste-based fertilisers. The sustainable use of fertilisers made from organic waste material in agriculture could reduce the need for mineral-based fertilisers, the production of which has negative environmental impacts, and depends on imports of phosphate rock, a limited resource.

Under [current rules](#), only conventional, non-organic fertilisers, typically extracted from mines or produced chemically can freely be traded across the EU. Innovative fertilising products produced from organic materials are outside the scope of the current Fertilisers Regulation. Their access to the single market is therefore dependant on mutual recognition between Member States, which is often difficult due to diverging national rules. Such products therefore have a competitive disadvantage which hampers innovation and investment in the circular economy.

According to estimates, if more bio-waste was recycled, it could replace up to 30 % of non-organic fertilisers. Currently, the EU imports around 6 million tonnes of phosphates a year but could replace up to 30% of this total by extraction from sewage sludge, biodegradable waste, meat and bone meal or manure.

The Commission has also recently presented a new Bioeconomy Strategy, as announced by President **Juncker** and First Vice-President **Timmermans** in their [letter of intent](#) accompanying President **Juncker's** 2018 [State of the Union Address](#), which will further support the scaling up the sustainable use of renewable resources and boost jobs, growth and investment into a sustainable circular bioeconomy in Europe.

More information:

[Press release – Circular economy: New Regulation to boost the use of organic and waste-based fertilisers](#) (17 March 2016)

European Citizens' Initiative: Political agreement reached on the Commission's proposal

A political priority of the Juncker Commission, the reformed Citizens' Initiative will be more user-friendly, making it easier for Europeans to participate in the democratic process.

Welcoming the agreement First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"9 million Europeans from all 28 Member States have already spoken up through the European Citizens Initiative. But we can do better if more citizens use this instrument for democratic participation at EU level. Today's agreement is a major step forward because we simplify the current rules and make it easier for European citizens to make themselves heard. They will now have an easily accessible and user-friendly tool at their disposal to ask the EU institutions directly to act on the issues they really care about. In the end it wasn't possible to lower the participation age from 18 to 16 years old across the EU, and I regret that. However, each country has the possibility to do so for their own citizens, so I would encourage them to allow younger generations to also have their say."*

The reformed European Citizens' Initiative will make it easier to:

- **Set-up initiatives:** Enhanced support will be made available to the organisers through contact points in each Member State and an online collaborative platform offering advice and allowing like-minded citizens from across Europe to get in touch to prepare their initiatives;
- **Register initiatives:** a more citizen-friendly procedure will give organisers a chance to revise their proposed initiative before the Commission's registration decision, to avoid situations where they are not allowed to collect signatures because the initiative does not fall within Treaty competences;
- **Organise the collection of signatures:** a free service for the online collection of signatures will be provided by the Commission to organisers, who will also have more flexibility to choose the starting date of their campaign;
- **Support initiatives:** all EU citizens will be able to support initiatives regardless of where they live; they will need to provide less personal data when giving their support to an initiative;
- **Follow-up on successful initiatives:** After the initiative has gathered

the required support of 1 million citizens, the phase of examination will be extended from 3 to 6 months, leaving time for more meaningful awareness-raising, engagement and debate before the Commission sets out its legal and political conclusions.

Next steps

The provisional agreement reached today must now be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Following their approval, the new Regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative will be published in the EU's Official Journal and start applying as of 1 January 2020.

Background

European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens in April 2012, upon the entry into force of the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation which implements the Treaty provisions.

In 2017, as part of President Juncker's State of the Union address, the European Commission tabled [reform proposals for the European Citizens' Initiative](#) to make it even more user-friendly. Today, the European Parliament and the Council agreed on this proposal.

Once formally registered, a European Citizens' Initiative allows one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

The conditions for admissibility, as foreseen by the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation, are that the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, that it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and that it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union.

For More Information

[Press Release](#): State of the Union 2017 – Democracy Package: Reform of Citizens' Initiative and Political Party funding

[Questions & Answers](#): State of the Union – Democracy Package: Questions & Answers on the European Citizens' Initiative and Political Parties Funding

[Press Release](#): European Citizens' Initiative: 9 million citizens have got involved in EU law-making

[Air transport fair competition rules – Council backs provisional deal](#)

Roaming charges ended in the European Union on 15 June 2017. Europeans travelling within EU countries will 'Roam Like at Home' and pay domestic prices for roaming calls, SMS and data. ...

On 23 June 2016 citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the UK formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU by...

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past two years, European migration policy has advanced in leaps and...

'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.' Robert Schuman 9 May 1950 On 25 March 2017, ...

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against the Russian Federation. ...

Enlargement is the process whereby countries join the EU. Since it was founded in 1957, the EU has grown from 6 member countries to 28. Any European country that respects the principles of liberty, ...

[Air transport fair competition rules – Council backs provisional deal](#)

Roaming charges ended in the European Union on 15 June 2017. Europeans travelling within EU countries will 'Roam Like at Home' and pay domestic prices for roaming calls, SMS and data. ...

On 23 June 2016 citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the UK formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU by...

Over the past 20 years, the European Union has put in place some of the highest common asylum standards in the world. And in the past two years, European migration policy has advanced in leaps and...

'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.' Robert Schuman 9 May 1950 on 25 March 2017, ...

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against the Russian Federation. ...

Enlargement is the process whereby countries join the EU. Since it was founded in 1957, the EU has grown from 6 member countries to 28. Any European country that respects the principles of liberty, ...

[Air transport fair competition rules – Council backs provisional deal](#)

Press contacts

[Päivikki Ala-Honkola](#)

Press officer

+32 2 281 86 48

+32 479 95 50 86

The EU is providing its air transport sector with a mechanism to ensure **fair competition with non-EU airlines**, which should also help to maintain **high connectivity throughout the EU**. Today member states' ambassadors approved the provisional agreement reached with the European Parliament on this reform, which is considered essential for a sector characterised by growing global competition and which has until now lacked an effective tool for addressing unfair commercial practices.

The EU finally has a tool which works to ensure healthy competition between all airlines. This should also mean lower fares and better connections for all those travelling by plane.

Norbert Hofer, Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria, Council Chair

Under the agreement, a single procedure to launch investigations and decide on any redressive measures will apply for both comprehensive EU agreements and bilateral air transport agreements that EU countries have concluded with non-EU countries.

The Commission will have powers to launch an investigation and take a decision on redressive measures if a practice that distorts competition has caused injury to an EU air carrier or poses a clear threat of injury. In the latter case, the redressive measures will not enter into force before the threat has developed into actual injury.

Any redressive measures – financial or operational – will be adopted by means of a Commission implementing act, but operational measures will be subject to a more stringent procedure.

Once formally adopted, the proposed regulation will replace the existing one, which has several shortcomings and which has never been used in practice. At international level, there is currently no framework under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) governing competition among air carriers.

Procedure and next steps

The agreement of 20 November was endorsed by the meeting of ambassadors in the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee. After the agreed text has undergone legal and linguistic finalisation, it must be formally adopted, first by the Parliament and then by the Council. Following adoption, the regulation will be published in the EU's Official Journal. It will enter into force twenty days after publication.

[Download as pdf](#)