

COLLEGE MEETING: Circular Economy: Commission presents Strategy for Plastics

The first-ever Europe-wide strategy on plastics was adopted today as part of the transition towards a more circular economy. It will protect the environment from plastic pollution whilst fostering growth and innovation, turning a challenge into a positive agenda for the Future of Europe. Under the new plans, all plastic packaging on the EU market will be recyclable by 2030, the consumption of single-use plastics will be reduced and the intentional use of microplastics will be restricted. The Commission will also develop labels for biodegradable and compostable plastics and propose new rules on packaging to improve the recyclability of plastics used on the market and increase the demand for recycled plastic content. To stop littering at sea, measures include new rules on port reception facilities to ensure that waste generated on ships or gathered at sea is not discharged at sea but returned to land and appropriately managed there. Driving investment and innovation, the Commission will scale up its support for national authorities and businesses, with an additional €100 million for financing the development of smarter and more recyclable plastics materials. The Commission will work with partners from around the world to come up with global solutions and develop international standards. You can follow [live](#) the press conference on the presentation of the package by First Vice-President **Timmermans** and Vice President **Katainen** in Strasbourg. All elements of the Strategy are available at the following links: [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheets](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Economie Circulaire: Nouvel page web d'Eurostat montrant le progrès de l'Union Européenne

Une économie circulaire vise à maintenir le plus longtemps possible la valeur des produits, matières et ressources et à réduire au minimum la production de déchets. La Commission européenne publie aujourd'hui une communication sur un cadre de suivi pour l'économie circulaire, accompagnée d'un document de travail de ses services. Pour appuyer cette initiative, Eurostat, l'Office statistique de l'Union européenne, lance une [nouvelle page sur son site web consacrée à l'économie circulaire](#), qui présente l'ensemble des indicateurs du cadre de suivi, fait l'objet de mises à jour sur la base des dernières données disponibles et comporte des outils de visualisation. Le cadre de suivi de la Commission est un outil essentiel qui permet de mesurer les progrès accomplis et de couvrir les différentes phases de l'économie circulaire dans l'UE et dans les États membres. Grâce à celui-ci, il sera possible de déterminer si les initiatives stratégiques existantes contribuent efficacement à atteindre les résultats escomptés et de mettre en évidence les domaines dans lesquels des mesures supplémentaires sont nécessaires. Cet outil constitue un appui crucial aux efforts déployés par l'UE pour favoriser une économie durable, à faible intensité de carbone, efficace dans l'utilisation des ressources et compétitive. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio –

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Le Fonds de Cohésion investit pour une eau potable plus saine et accessible en Roumanie

Le [Fonds de Cohésion](#) de l'UE investit 57,4 millions d'euros dans des infrastructures de distribution, de gestion et de traitement de l'eau dans le comté de Caraş, à l'Ouest du pays. *“L'Union européenne, à travers sa politique de Cohésion, investit pour que chacun ait accès à une eau saine, dans un environnement préservé,”* a commenté la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina Creţu. Le projet comprend, entre autres, la construction ou rénovation de plus de 120 km de réseau de distribution d'eau potable, la réhabilitation de 20 réservoirs et l'extension du réseau d'égout sur plus de 160 km. Ce projet financé par l'UE contribuera à protéger l'environnement, en limitant notamment les infiltrations des eaux usées dans les sols, dans une zone où vivent près de 138 000 personnes et 19 050 habitants du comté bénéficieront pour la première fois d'un accès continu à une eau potable de qualité. Les travaux devraient être achevés à l'été 2018. *(Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

State aid: 2017 Scoreboard confirms benefits of modernisation leading to quicker implementation on the ground of public support by Member States

The 2017 State Aid Scoreboard, published today by the European Commission, confirms the benefits of the Juncker Commission's [State Aid Modernisation](#) package. The annual [State Aid Scoreboard](#) is based on expenditure reports provided by Member States and covers all existing aid measures to industries, services, agriculture and fisheries. It also includes aid granted to financial institutions in the context of the financial and economic crisis. Aid to railways and services of general economic interest is not covered by the Scoreboard. The 2017 State Aid Scoreboard shows that more than 97% of new aid measures for which expenditure was reported fell under the [General Block Exemption Regulation \(GBER\)](#) and could be more quickly disbursed – an absolute increase of about 25% compared to 2013. This development is in line with the Commission's proposal under the “Doing Less More Efficiently” scenario of the [White Paper on the Future of Europe by 2025](#) – to focus on delivering more and faster, while doing less where it is perceived not to have an added value. The Scoreboard also shows that around 94% of total State aid spending was allocated to horizontal objectives of common interest, such as environmental protection, research, development and innovation and regional development. Margrethe Vestager, Commissioner in charge of competition, said: *“More than 97% of new aid measures are being paid out without prior authorisation from the Commission. This is confirmed in the latest State aid Scoreboard. Our modernisation of State aid rules means less red tape and faster allocation of resources. This allows us to focus on measures that have the biggest impact on competition, to be “big on big things and small on small things”, to the benefit of all European citizens.”* A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Antitrust: Commission confirms unannounced inspection in kraft paper sector

The European Commission can confirm that on 15 January 2018 its officials carried out an unannounced inspection at the premises of a company operating in the kraft paper sector. The inspection took place in one Member State and is part of the same investigation that led the Commission to carry out unannounced inspections in [2016](#) and [2017](#) in the sector of kraft paper and industrial paper sacks. The Commission has concerns that the inspected company may have violated [Article 101](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which prohibits anticompetitive practices such as price fixing and customer allocation. The Commission officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the relevant national competition authority. Unannounced inspections are a preliminary step in investigations into suspected cartels. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour; nor does it prejudice the outcome of the investigation. A full statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

[How is the EU progressing towards the circular economy?](#)

A circular economy aims to maintain the value of products, materials and resources for as long as possible and minimise the generation of waste. The European Commission publishes today a Communication on the monitoring framework for the circular economy and an accompanying Staff working document. In order to underpin this initiative, **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**, is launching [a new website section dedicated to circular economy](#) reporting all the indicators of the monitoring framework, updated with latest data, as well as supporting visualisation tools.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

[Plastic Waste: a European strategy to protect the planet, defend our citizens and empower our industries](#)

It will protect the environment from plastic pollution whilst fostering

growth and innovation, turning a challenge into a positive agenda for the Future of Europe. There is a **strong business case** for transforming the way products are designed, produced, used, and recycled in the EU and by taking the lead in this transition, we will create new **investment opportunities and jobs**. Under the new plans, **all plastic packaging on the EU market will be recyclable by 2030**, the consumption of **single-use plastics will be reduced** and the intentional use of **microplastics will be restricted**.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, responsible for sustainable development, said: *"If we don't change the way we produce and use plastics, there will be more plastics than fish in our oceans by 2050. We must stop plastics getting into our water, our food, and even our bodies. The only long-term solution is to reduce plastic waste by recycling and reusing more. This is a challenge that citizens, industry and governments must tackle together. With the EU Plastics Strategy we are also driving a new and more circular business model. We need to invest in innovative new technologies that keep our citizens and our environment safe whilst keeping our industry competitive."*

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness, said: *"With our plastic strategy we are laying the foundations for a new circular plastics economy, and driving investment towards it. This will help to reduce plastic litter in land, air and sea while also bringing new opportunities for innovation, competitiveness and high quality jobs. This is a great opportunity for European industry to develop global leadership in new technology and materials. Consumers are empowered to make conscious choices in favour of the environment. This is true win-win."*

Every year, Europeans generate 25 million tonnes of plastic waste, but less than 30% is collected for recycling. Across the world, plastics make up 85% of beach litter. And plastics are even reaching citizens' lungs and dinner tables, with microplastics in air, water and food having an unknown impact on their health. Building on the Commission's past work, the new EU-wide strategy on plastics will tackle the issue head on.

Today's plastic strategy will transform the way products are designed, produced, used, and recycled in the EU. Too often the way plastics are currently produced, used and discarded fail to capture the economic benefits of a more circular approach. It harms the environment. The goal is to protect the environment whilst at the same time lay foundations to a new plastic economy, where the design and production fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs and more sustainable materials are developed.

Europe is best placed to lead this transition. This approach will bring new opportunities for innovation, competitiveness and job creation. With the plastic strategy, the Commission has adopted a Monitoring Framework, composed of a set of ten key indicators which cover each phase of the cycle, which will measure progress towards the transition to a circular economy at EU and national level.

Under the new strategy, the European Union will:

- **Make recycling profitable for business:** New rules on packaging will be developed to improve the recyclability of plastics used on the market and increase the demand for recycled plastic content. With more plastic being collected, improved and scaled up recycling facilities should be set up, alongside a better and standardised system for the separate collection and sorting of waste across the EU. This will save around a hundred euros per tonne collected. It will also deliver greater added value for a more competitive, resilient plastics industry.
- **Curb plastic waste:** European legislation has already led to a significant reduction in plastic bag use in several Member States. The new plans will now turn to other single-use plastics and fishing gear, supporting national awareness campaigns and determining the scope of new EU-wide rules to be proposed in 2018 based on stakeholder consultation and evidence. The Commission will also take measures to restrict the use of microplastics in products, and fix labels for biodegradable and compostable plastics.
- **Stop littering at sea:** New rules on port reception facilities will tackle sea-based marine litter, with measures to ensure that waste generated on ships or gathered at sea is not left behind but returned to land and adequately managed there. Also included are measures to reduce the administrative burden on ports, ships and competent authorities.
- **Drive investment and innovation:** The Commission will provide guidance for national authorities and European businesses on how to minimise plastic waste at source. Support for innovation will be scaled up, with an additional €100 million financing the development of smarter and more recyclable plastics materials, making recycling processes more efficient, and tracing and removing hazardous substances and contaminants from recycled plastics.
- **Spur change across the world:** As the European Union does its own homework, we will also work with partners from around the world to come up with global solutions and develop international standards. We will also continue to support others, as we have done with the clean-up of the Ganga River in India.

Next Steps

The new Directive on port reception facilities proposed today will now go to the European Parliament and Council for adoption.

Subject to Better Regulation requirements, the Commission will present the proposal on single-use plastics later in 2018.

Stakeholders have until 12 February 2018 to contribute to the ongoing [public consultation](#).

The Commission will launch the work on the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and prepare guidelines on separate collection and sorting of waste to be issued in 2019.

For the full list of measures and their timeline, see the Annex to the Plastics Strategy [here](#).

Background

Continuing in the spirit of the 2015 Circular Economy Package, the Plastics Strategy has been prepared by a core project team of First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** and Commissioners Karmenu **Vella** and Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**. Many other Commissioners were also involved in its preparation and helped identify the most effective tools covering a wide range of policy areas.

The initiatives adopted by the College today take the form of:

- A Communication on a European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy;
- A Communication on the Interface between Chemicals, Products and Waste;
- A Monitoring Framework on the Circular Economy;
- A new Directive on Port Reception Facilities.

They are complemented by the Report on Critical Raw Materials and the Report on Oxo-plastics.

The European Commission adopted an ambitious Circular Economy Package on 2 December 2015, of which today's measures form part.

The Plastics Strategy will also make a tangible contribution to reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement objectives on climate change.

The EU has already taken significant steps by setting requirements for Member States to adopt measures to cut the consumption of plastic bags and to monitor and reduce marine litter.

Going forward, there are also significant prospects for developing an innovative circular plastics industry worldwide.

For More Information

[A European Plastics Strategy: Questions & Answers](#)

[Fact Sheets](#)

[Plastics Strategy](#)

[Interface Communication](#)

[Monitoring Framework](#)

[Proposal on Port Reception Facilities](#)

[Raw Materials Report](#)

[Report on Oxo-plastics](#)

[Eurobarometer: SMEs and the circular economy](#)

Pressemitteilung: Krisenmanagement der Europäischen Zentralbank: ein solider Rahmen, doch bestehen Mängel, so das Fazit der EU-Prüfer

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