

# Water elements in the European Green Deal

**European Commission**

Directorate-General for the Environment  
Directorate C – Quality of Life

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## 1. The European Green Deal:

On 11 December 2019 the European Commission adopted the **European Green Deal**<sup>1</sup> – a roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all, defined by President Ursula von der Leyen as the EU new growth strategy.

The European Green Deal (EGD) provides a roadmap with actions<sup>2</sup> to boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy and stop climate change, revert biodiversity loss and cut pollution. It outlines investments needed and financing tools available, and explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition.

Fig. 1: The European Green Deal – Elements



<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

COM (2019) 640 final [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1596443911913&uri=CELEX:52019DC0640#document2>

The EGD roadmap of actions will be updated as needs evolve and the policy responses are formulated. All EU actions and policies will have to contribute to the EGD objectives. The challenges are complex and interlinked. The policy response must be bold and comprehensive and seek to maximise benefits for health, quality of life, resilience and competitiveness. It will require intense coordination to exploit the available synergies across all policy areas. The Commission is progressively bringing forward the measures announced in the EGD roadmap.

Fig. 2: The European Green Deal – Initiatives



In the meantime, the coronavirus has shaken Europe and the world to its core, testing healthcare and welfare systems, our societies and economies and our way of living and working together. On 27 May 2020 the Commission put forward its proposal for a major recovery plan<sup>3</sup>. To ensure the recovery is sustainable, even, inclusive and fair for all Member States, the European Commission proposed to create a new recovery instrument, **Next Generation EU**<sup>4</sup>, embedded within a powerful, modern and revamped long-term EU budget. The Commission also unveiled its adjusted Work Programme for 2020<sup>5</sup>, which will prioritise the actions needed to propel Europe's recovery and resilience.

The EGD covers all sectors of the economy and actions related to water can be identified in all its elements.

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_940](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_940)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/eu-budget-powering-recovery-plan-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/eu-budget-powering-recovery-plan-europe_en)

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-commission-work-programme-key-documents\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en)

## 1.1. The European Green Deal: Adopted initiatives

| Title  | Reference            | Adoption          |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|
| The European Green Deal  | COM (2019) 640 final | 11 December 2019  |
| A New Industrial Strategy for Europe   | COM (2020) 102 final | 10 March 2020     |
| A new Circular Economy Action Plan - For a cleaner and more competitive Europe   | COM (2020) 98 final  | 11 March 2020     |
| Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives   | COM (2020) 380 final | 20 May 2020       |
| A Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F) for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system   | COM (2020) 381 final | 20 May 2020       |
| Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation  | COM (2020) 456 final | 27 May 2020       |
| Proposal for a Regulation establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility  | COM (2020) 408 final | 28 May 2020       |
| Powering a climate-neutral economy: An EU Strategy on Energy System Integration  | COM (2020) 299 final | 8 July 2020       |
| Short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks   | COM (2020) 318 final | 15 July 2020      |
| Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy – Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans   | SWD (2020) 205 final | 17 September 2020 |
| Improving access to justice in environmental matters in the EU and its Member States   | COM (2020) 643 final | 14 October 2020   |
| General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 ( <i>8th EAP</i> )  | COM (2020) 652 final | 14 October 2020   |
| A Renovation Wave for Europe – greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives ( <i>and statement on the New European Bauhaus<sup>6</sup></i> ) | COM (2020) 662 final | 14 October 2020   |
| EU strategy to reduce methane emissions  | COM (2020) 663 final | 14 October 2020   |
| Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability – Towards a Toxic-Free Environment   | COM (2020) 667 final | 14 October 2020   |

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_20\\_1902](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_1902)

## 1.2. The European Green Deal: Forthcoming initiatives

| Title   | Timing     |
|---|------------|
| EU Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe <sup>7</sup>                              | Q4-2020    |
| Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility                                     | Q4-2020    |
| FuelEU Maritime - Green European Maritime Space                                 | Q4 2020    |
| Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy  | Q4 2020    |
| 2 Communications on the future of Research and Innovation (R&I)                 | Q3/Q4-2020 |
| EU Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change                                    | Q1 2021    |
| Communication on Sustainable Blue Economy                                       | Q1 2021    |
| Zero Pollution Action Plan for air, soil and water                              | Q2-2021    |
| Sustainable production initiative, including a revision of Eco-design directive | Q4 2021    |
| New legal framework on the restoration of healthy ecosystems                    | Q4 2021    |

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<sup>7</sup> Included in this list although it is not part of the Green Deal.

## 2. Water and marine –related elements in the adopted initiatives

### A New Industrial Strategy for Europe

COM (2020) 102 final

#### Summary:

To uphold Europe's industrial leadership, a new industrial strategy will help deliver on three key priorities: maintaining European industry's global competitiveness and a level playing field, at home and globally, making Europe climate-neutral by 2050 and shaping Europe's digital future

#### Water and marine elements:

*No explicit water elements*

#### Linked initiative:

The ongoing review of the **Industrial Emissions Directive** will, amongst others, explore the potential for enhanced water efficiency and water reuse also in industrial processes<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12306-EU-rules-on-industrial-emissions-revision>

## A new Circular Economy Action Plan - For a cleaner and more competitive Europe COM (2020) 98

### Summary:

The new<sup>9</sup> Action Plan announces initiatives along the entire life cycle of products, targeting for example their design, promoting circular economy processes, fostering sustainable consumption, and aiming to ensure that the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible. Its measures focus on the sectors that use most resources and where the potential for circularity is high such as: electronics and ICT; batteries and vehicles; packaging; plastics; textiles; construction and buildings; food; water and nutrients

### Water and marine elements:

The Commission will strictly monitor and support the implementation of the requirements of the recast Drinking Water Directive to **make drinkable tap water of high quality and accessible** in public places, which will reduce dependence on bottled water and prevent packaging waste

The Commission will address the presence of microplastics in the environment by:

- **restricting intentionally added microplastics** and tackling **pellets** taking into account the opinion of the European Chemicals Agency;
- developing **labelling, standardisation, certification and regulatory measures** on unintentional release of microplastics, including measures to increase the capture of microplastics at all relevant stages of products' lifecycle;
- further developing and harmonising methods for **measuring unintentionally released microplastics**, especially from tyres and textiles, and delivering harmonised data on microplastics concentrations in seawater;
- **closing the gaps on scientific knowledge** related to the risk and occurrence of microplastics in the environment, drinking water and foods

Textiles are the fourth highest-pressure category for the use of primary raw materials and water. The Commission will propose a comprehensive **EU Strategy for Textiles**, based on input from industry and other stakeholders

The new Water Reuse Regulation will **encourage circular approaches to water reuse in agriculture**. The Commission will **facilitate water reuse and efficiency**, including in industrial processes

Furthermore, the Commission will develop an **Integrated Nutrient Management Plan**, with a view to ensuring more sustainable application of nutrients and stimulating the markets for recovered nutrients

The Commission will also consider **reviewing directives on waste-water treatment and sewage sludge** (considering e.g. recovery of phosphorous from sludge, energy use in treatment plants)

The Commission will assess natural means of nutrient removal such as algae

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<sup>9</sup> The European Commission launched a [first Circular Economy Action Plan](#) in 2015. All 54 actions under the plan have been delivered or are being implemented.

## Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives

### COM (2030) 380 final

#### Summary:

The Strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. In the post-COVID context, the Strategy aims to support the green recovery building our societies' resilience to future threats such as climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks, including by protecting wildlife.

Main elements:

- Establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea
- An EU Nature Restoration Plan
- A set of measures to enable the transformative change
- Measures to tackle the global biodiversity challenge

#### Water and marine -related elements:

To the benefit of our environment and economy, and to support the EU's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, we need to protect more nature. In this spirit, at least **30% of the land and 30% of the sea should be protected in the EU**. This is a minimum of an extra 4% for land and 19% for sea areas as compared to today. Effectively manage all protected areas, defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitoring them appropriately

Greater efforts are needed to restore freshwater ecosystems and the natural functions of rivers in order to achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive. This can be done by **removing or adjusting barriers** that prevent the passage of migrating fish and improving the flow of water and sediments. To help make this a reality, at least **25,000 km of rivers will be restored** into free-flowing rivers by 2030 through the removal of primarily obsolete barriers and the restoration of floodplains and wetlands. Technical guidance and support to the Member States to identify sites and help mobilise funding will be provided by the Commission in 2021, in consultation with all relevant authorities

Member State authorities should **review water abstraction and impoundment permits to implement ecological flows** in order to achieve good status or potential of all surface waters and good status of all groundwater by 2027 at the latest, as required by the Water Framework Directive. To that effect, the Commission will provide technical support to Member States on their measures by 2023

Achieving **good environmental status** of marine ecosystems, including through strictly protected areas, must involve the restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems as well as important fish spawning and nursery areas. Marine resources must be harvested sustainably and there must be zero-tolerance for illegal practices. In this regard, the **full implementation** of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Birds and Habitats Directives is essential

The application of an ecosystem-based management approach under EU legislation will reduce the adverse impacts of fishing, extraction and other human activities, **especially on sensitive species and seabed habitats**. To support this, national maritime spatial plans, which Member States have to deliver in 2021, should aim at covering all maritime sectors and activities, as well as area-based conservation-management measures. The negative impacts on sensitive species and habitats, including on the seabed through fishing and extraction activities, should therefore be substantially reduced to achieve good environmental status

The Commission will also propose a new action plan to **conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems** by 2021. Where necessary, measures will be introduced to **limit the use of fishing gear most harmful to biodiversity**, including on the seabed. It will also look at how to reconcile the use

of bottom-contacting fishing gear with biodiversity goals, given it is now the most damaging activity to the seabed. The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund should also **support** this transition

The **by-catch of species** threatened with extinction must also be eliminated or reduced to a level that allows full recovery. This should also be the case for those in bad conservation status or not in good environmental status. Furthermore, the by-catch of other species must be eliminated or, where this is not possible, minimised so as not to threaten their conservation status. To support this, data collection on by-catch for all sensitive species needs to be stepped up

The EU will support the conclusion of an ambitious legally binding agreement on **marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction** (BBNJ) by the end of 2020; it must set clear global procedures for identifying, designating and effectively managing ecologically representative marine protected areas in the high seas

EU should help broker agreement on the designation of three vast Marine Protected Areas in the **Southern Ocean**

The EU will apply **zero tolerance towards illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing** and will combat overfishing, including through WTO negotiations on a global agreement to ban harmful fisheries subsidies

The EU should advocate that marine minerals in the **international seabed area** cannot be exploited before the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment are understood and that operations can be carried out with no serious harm to the environment

Work with (marine) **regional organisations** to put in place measures to protect and sustainably use sensitive maritime ecosystems and species, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction, with a focus on marine biodiversity hotspots

## A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system COM (2020) 381 final

### Summary:

The Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly. The Farm to Fork Strategy lays down a new approach to ensure that agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, and the food value chain contribute appropriately to this process.

The F2F aims to accelerate our transition to a sustainable food system that should:

- Have a neutral or positive environmental impact
- Help to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts
- Reverse the loss of biodiversity
- Ensure food security, nutrition and public health, making sure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, sustainable food
- Preserve affordability of food while generating fairer economic returns, fostering competitiveness of the EU supply sector and promoting fair trade

### Water and marine -related elements:

The EU's goals are to **reduce the environmental and climate footprint** of the EU food system and strengthen its resilience, ensure food security in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss and lead a global transition towards competitive sustainability from farm to fork and tapping into new opportunities. This means: ensuring the food chain has a **neutral or positive environmental impact** and preserve and restore the land, **freshwater** and **sea-based resources** on which the food system depends

The **circular bio-based economy** is still a largely untapped potential for farmers and their cooperatives. Farmers should grasp opportunities to **reduce methane emissions** from livestock by developing the production of renewable energy and investing in anaerobic digesters for biogas production from agriculture waste and residues, such as manure. Farms also have the potential to **produce biogas** from other sources of waste and residues, such as from the food and beverage industry, **sewage, wastewater** and municipal waste. The Commission will take action to speed-up market adoption of these and other energy efficiency solutions under the clean energy initiatives and programmes

The Commission will take additional action to **reduce the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50%** and the use of more hazardous pesticides<sup>13</sup> by 50% by 2030

The Commission will revise the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, enhance provisions on integrated pest management (IPM) and promote greater use of safe alternatives. IPM will encourage the use of alternative control techniques, such as crop rotation and mechanical weeding

Agricultural practices that reduce the use of pesticides through the CAP will be of paramount importance and the Strategic Plans should reflect this transition and promote access to advice

The Commission will also facilitate the placing on the market of pesticides containing biological active substances and reinforce the environmental risk assessment of pesticides. It will act to reduce length of the pesticide authorisation process by MS

The Commission will act to reduce nutrient losses by at least 50%, while ensuring that there is no deterioration in soil fertility. This will **reduce the use of fertilisers by at least 20%** by 2030. This will be achieved by implementing and enforcing the relevant environmental and climate legislation in full, by identifying with MS the nutrient load reductions needed to achieve these goals, applying balanced fertilisation and sustainable nutrient management

The Commission will develop with Member States an **integrated nutrient management action plan** to address nutrient pollution at source and increase the sustainability of the livestock sector. The

Commission will also work with Member States to extend the application of precise fertilisation techniques and sustainable agricultural practices, notably in hotspot areas of intensive livestock farming and of recycling of organic waste into renewable fertilisers

The Commission will therefore take action to **reduce overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50% by 2030**.

Organic farming needs to be further promoted. In addition to CAP measures, such as eco-schemes, investments and advisory services, and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) measures, the Commission will put forward an **Action Plan on organic farming**

The **new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** aims to help farmers to improve their environmental and climate performance through a more results-oriented model, better use of data and analysis, improved mandatory environmental standards, new voluntary measures and an increased focus on investments into green and digital technologies and practices.

The new **'eco-schemes'** will offer a major stream of funding to boost sustainable practices. Member States and the Commission will have to ensure that they are appropriately resourced and implemented in the Strategic Plans. The Commission will support the introduction of a minimum ring-fencing budget for eco-schemes.

The Commission will make **recommendations** to each Member State on the specific objectives of the CAP, before they formally submit the draft Strategic Plans

The **shift to sustainable fish and seafood production must also be accelerated**. Economic data show that, where fishing has become sustainable, income has grown in parallel. The Commission will step up efforts to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels via CFP where implementation gaps remain (e.g. by reducing wasteful discarding), strengthen fisheries management in the Mediterranean in cooperation with all coastal states and re-assess, by 2022, how the CFP addresses the risks triggered by climate change

The Commission envisages adopting **EU guidelines for Member States' sustainable aquaculture** development. It will also set out well-targeted support for the algae industry, as algae should become an important source of alternative protein for a sustainable food system and global food security.

The Commission envisages clarifying the **competition rules** for collective initiatives that promote sustainability in supply chains

The Commission will develop an **EU Code of conduct for responsible business and marketing practice** accompanied with a monitoring framework

Under **Horizon 2020**, the Commission has launched a call for proposals for Green Deal priorities in 2020 for a total of around EUR 1 billion. Under **Horizon Europe**, it proposes to spend EUR 10 billion on R&I on food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and the environment as well as the use of digital technologies and nature-based solutions for agri-food.

The Commission will work with Member States to strengthen the role of the European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (**EIP-AGRI**) in the Strategic Plans

The Commission will promote effective **Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)**, involving all food chain actors. In their CAP Strategic Plans, Member States will need to scale up support for AKIS and strengthen resources to develop and maintain appropriate advisory services needed to achieve the Green Deal objectives and targets

As part of the European data strategy, the **common European agriculture data space** will enhance the competitive sustainability of EU agriculture. The EU programmes Copernicus and European Marine Observation and Data Network (**EMODnet**) will reduce the investment risks and facilitate sustainable practices in the fisheries and aquaculture sector

## Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation

[COM \(2020\) 456 final](#)

### **Proposal for a Regulation establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility**

[COM \(2020\) 408](#)

### **Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy – Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans**

[SWD \(2020\) 205 final](#)

#### Summary:

The **Recovery and Resilience Facility** is the centrepiece of **NextGenerationEU**, a temporary recovery instrument that allows the Commission to raise funds to help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic

On 21 July 2020, the European Council reached a political agreement on NextGenerationEU, including the Facility, and the 2021-2027 long-term EU budget. The proposed financial envelope is **EUR 603 billion**. Member States may submit their **National Recovery and Resilience Plans** at the latest by 30 April 2021

The Facility is closely aligned with the Commission's priorities ensuring in the long-term a sustainable and inclusive recovery that promotes the **green and digital transitions**. In their plans, Member States are invited to describe how the plans support actions in full respect of the climate, environmental, social and digital priorities of the Union and the 'do no significant harm principle'

#### Water and marine -related elements:

There is no specific water or marine element in the Communication and draft Regulation. In the Guidance to Member States, Member States are invited to explain **how the plan will contribute to reaching the environmental goals** and targets set at EU level, for instance the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources

The appraisal of MS plans will be based i.e. on an **internal inventory of environmental investment priorities** at country and thematic levels. For marine and water, it is fed by the recent European Commission / OECD report investment needs for water supply and sanitation, complemented by additional on-going research on investment needs to support, WFD, FD and MSFD implementation

Recovery and Resilience Plans are crucial and timely to **help Member States finance the measures to reach the objectives of EU water and marine legislation**. They coincide time-wise with the process of developing the third River Basin Management Plans and Programmes of Measures, the second Flood Risk Management Plans and the update of the Programme of Measures under the Marine Strategies

*(The Commission has published **examples of green investments in the sector of water**)<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/green\\_semester/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/green_semester/index_en.htm)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/green\\_semester/pdf/Water\\_examples\\_projects\\_Oct2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/green_semester/pdf/Water_examples_projects_Oct2020.pdf)

## Powering a climate-neutral economy: An EU Strategy on Energy System Integration COM (2020) 299 final

### Summary:

The EU Strategy on Energy System Integration will provide the **framework for the green energy transition**. The current model where energy consumption in transport, industry, gas and buildings is happening in 'silos' -each with separate value chains, rules, infrastructure, planning and operations- cannot deliver climate neutrality by 2050 in a cost efficient way

Energy system integration is defined in the strategy as the coordinated planning and operation of the energy system 'as a whole', across multiple energy carriers, **infrastructures, and consumption sectors** – it is the pathway towards an effective, affordable and deep decarbonisation of the European economy in line with the **Paris Agreement** and the **UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Identified benefits beyond energy and greenhouse gases emissions savings include the reduction in air pollution and the energy **water footprint** which is essential for climate adaptation, health and **preservation of natural resources**

There are three main pillars to this Strategy: 1) **a more 'circular' energy system**, with energy efficiency at its core; 2) a greater **direct electrification** of end-use sectors; and 3) where electrification is difficult, the strategy promotes **clean fuels**, including renewable hydrogen and sustainable biofuels and biogas

### Water and marine related elements:

Under Pillar 1: There is further potential, with reuse of waste heat from industrial processes, data centres, or **energy produced from bio-waste or in waste water treatment plants** cited as examples

It is suggested that the implementation of the new Circular Economy Action Plan and waste legislation and sustainable agriculture and forestry management systems could result in **increased sustainable production of bioenergy from waste-water**, waste and residue. The Strategy identifies that **more efforts** are needed to take advantage of the full potential for **energy system integration, exploiting synergies and avoiding trade-offs**

Key actions related to the **promotion of renewable and low-carbon fuel** include the consideration of additional measures possibly through minimum shares or quotas in specific end-use sectors (including **maritime**), through the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive and building on its sectoral targets, complemented by additional measures assessed under the REFUEL Aviation and **FUEL Maritime initiatives** (2020)

## Short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks

### COM(2020) 318 final

#### Summary:

The Communication focuses on the early detection of COVID-19 cases and a rapid response to prevent further spread, combined with specific measures to protect the most vulnerable in our societies.

Action areas are identified for the following:

1. Testing, contact tracing and public health surveillance
2. Medical countermeasures
3. Healthcare surge capacity
4. Non-pharmaceutical countermeasures
5. Support to vulnerable groups
6. Reducing the burden of seasonal influenza

#### Water and marine -related elements:

With regards to **Testing, contact tracing and public health surveillance** one of the identified actions is **sampling campaign in waste waters, assessment of results and connection to epidemiologic data** (for both the European Commission & Member States), with the aim of tracking the presence of the virus in urban waste waters

There is reference in the text to the fact that several Member States have taken the initiative to **monitor the presence of COVID-19 residues in their waste-water**. The **work of JRC together with DG ENV** on the **pan-European Umbrella Study**, connecting the leading national and regional authorities in a reference study, is highlighted

## Improving access to justice in environmental matters in the EU and its Member States

[COM \(2020\) 643 final](#)

### Commission proposal to amend the Aarhus Regulation

[COM \(2020\) 642 final](#)

#### Summary:

The Commission committed in the European Green Deal to consider revising the Aarhus Regulation to improve access to administrative and judicial review at EU level for citizens and NGOs who have concerns about the legality of decisions with effects on the environment, and to take action to improve their access to justice before national courts in all Member States

National and local authorities take many important decisions when applying EU environmental laws, for example when granting permits to infrastructure projects or industrial installations that may pollute nature and soil, air or water. It is important to improve public scrutiny over these decisions. Today, there is still a number of practical or formal obstacles to going to court, including unreasonable court fees and restrictive procedural rules curbing NGOs' ability to represent the public interest. The Commission will take measures to help Member States improve their systems such as training, information sharing and capacity building, but is also prepared to take legal action in case of breaches of EU law

The legislative proposal amends the Aarhus Regulation to allow for better public scrutiny of EU acts affecting the environment. The proposed amendments improve the possibilities to request that the EU institutions review such acts to better ensure environmental protection. This will improve openness and accountability, when it comes to environmental protection, contribute to greater transparency and a more effective pursuit of the EU environmental objectives

#### Water and marine -related elements:

*There are no clear, explicit water or marine elements in this Communication. However, an important part of the environmental implementation review and EU case-law feeding into this proposal is related to water*

The first priority area for Member States is to **secure the correct transposition of EU** environmental legislation that include provisions on access to justice. Several Member States should take further measures to **provide legal standing to environmental NGOs** to bring legal challenges on EU-related environmental issues. Environmental claimants should not face national procedural hurdles, such as prohibitively high costs

The second priority is for the **co-legislators to include provisions on access to justice** in EU legislative proposals of new or revised EU environmental law. In 2017 the Commission issued a Notice on access to justice in environmental matter to take stock of the practical implications of CJEU case law and to help Member State authorities and practitioners to understand the importance of these implications in the fields regulated by EU environmental law

The third priority is the **review by the Member States of their own national legislative and regulatory provisions** that prevent NGOs active in environmental protection or individuals directly affected by a breach of EU environmental law resulting from the actions or omissions of public authorities. It is indispensable to revise national provisions for the purpose of removing any barriers to access to justice, such as restrictions on legal standing or disproportionate costs and, as a result, ensure effective access to justice in environmental matters in the EU

The fourth priority area concerns the **obligation of national courts to guarantee the right** of individuals and NGOs to an effective remedy under EU law. The Commission will closely follow how national courts, including supreme courts, ensure effective judicial protection in environmental matters in their respective legal orders, and will take action as necessary

## General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 COM (2020) 652 final

### Summary:

The EU General Environment Action Programme is foreseen in Article 192(3) TFEU. The proposal of 8<sup>th</sup> EAP supports the environment and climate action objectives of the **European Green Deal**. It provides an opportunity for the EU as a whole to reiterate our commitment to the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP's **2050 vision**: we want to ensure wellbeing for all, while staying within the planetary boundaries

The 8<sup>th</sup> EAP proposal calls for active engagement of all stakeholders at all levels of governance, to ensure that EU climate and environment laws are effectively implemented. It forms the EU's basis for achieving the United Nation's **2030 Agenda** and its **Sustainable Development Goals**

Building on the European Green Deal, it has the following six priority objectives:

- achieving the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target and **climate neutrality by 2050**
- enhancing **adaptive capacity**, strengthening **resilience** and **reducing vulnerability to climate change**
- advancing towards a **regenerative growth model**, decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation, and accelerating the transition to a **circular economy**
- pursuing a **zero-pollution ambition**, including for air, **water** and soil and protecting the health and well-being of Europeans
- protecting, preserving and restoring **biodiversity**, and **enhancing natural capital** (notably air, **water**, soil, and forest, freshwater, wetland and marine ecosystems)
- **reducing environmental and climate pressures** related to production and consumption (particularly in the areas of energy, industrial development, buildings and infrastructure, mobility and the food system)

### Water and marine -related elements:

Six thematic priority objectives:

- (d) pursuing a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free-environment, including for air, **water** and soil, and protecting the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts
- (e) protecting, preserving and restoring biodiversity and enhancing natural capital, notably air, **water**, soil, and forest, **freshwater**, wetland and **marine ecosystems**

Enabling conditions to achieve this programme's priority objectives:

- (a) Ensuring effective and efficient implementation of Union legislation
- (b) Strengthening the integrated approach to policy development and implementation
- (c) Integrating environmental and climate sustainability in the European Semester of economic governance, including in the National Reform Programmes and National Recovery and Resilience plans
- (d) Mobilising sustainable investments
- (e) Phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies
- (f) Ensuring that environmental policies and action are based on the best available scientific knowledge
- (g) Harnessing the potential of digital and data technologies
- (h) Making full use of nature based solutions and social innovation

- (i) Effectively applying high standards for transparency, public participation and access to justice
- (j) Making the data and evidence linked to the implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP publicly available
- (k) Supporting the global uptake of the priority objectives

The Commission, supported by the European Environment Agency and the European Chemicals Agency, shall assess and report on the progress. The European Environment Agency and the European Chemicals Agency shall support the Commission in improving the availability and relevance of data and knowledge

## A Renovation Wave for Europe – greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives COM (2020) 662 final and *Initiative on the New European Bauhaus*

### Summary:

Renovation of both public and private buildings was identified in the European Green Deal as a key initiative to drive energy efficiency in the sector and deliver on objectives

These renovations will enhance the quality of life for people living in and using the buildings, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create additional green jobs in the construction sector

In parallel to the strategy, the Commission adopted new rules for the smart readiness of buildings<sup>11</sup>, promoting digitally friendly renovations, integration of renewable energy and enable the measurement of energy consumption

There are seven key principles: 1) Energy efficiency first; 2) Affordability; 3) Decarbonisation and integration of renewables; 4) Life-cycle thinking and circularity; 5) High health and environmental standards; 6) Tackling the twin challenges of the green and digital transitions together; 7) Respect for aesthetics and architectural quality

The Commission launched, at the same time as the Renovation wave strategy, the initiative on the **New European Bauhaus**<sup>12</sup>. It will be a driving force, bringing the European Green Deal closer to citizens in an attractive, innovative and human-centred way. It will act as a network and contact point, creating a bridge between the world of science and technology and the world of art and culture

### Water and marine -related elements:

Per the Communication, the Commission will introduce **Digital Building Logbooks**, which will incorporate **The Level(s) Framework - The European Framework for Sustainable Buildings**<sup>13</sup>. Within the Level(s) framework, each indicator is designed to link the individual building's impact with the priorities for sustainability at a European level. Level(s) include **water use** (as well as energy, materials etc.) in the assessment of the building lifecycle through design, construction, use, and end of life

Under the key **principle of high health and environmental standards** the text refers to ensuring high air quality, **good water management**, disaster prevention and **protection against climate-related hazards**, removal of and **protection against harmful substances** (examples in the text are of asbestos and radon)

For the key principle of the **green and digital transition**, the text refers to smart buildings enabling efficient production and use of renewables at house, district or city level

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<sup>11</sup> C(2020)6929-6930.

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS\\_20\\_1894](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_20_1894)

<sup>13</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/buildings.htm>

## An EU strategy to reduce methane emissions COM (2020) 663 final

### Summary:

This Methane Strategy sets out measures to cut methane emissions in Europe and internationally. It presents actions in the energy, agriculture and waste sectors (legislative and non-legislative), which account for around 95% of methane emissions associated with anthropogenic activity worldwide. Tackling methane emissions is essential to reaching **2030 climate targets** and the **2050 climate neutrality** goal, as well as contributing to the Commission's **zero-pollution ambition**

The Strategy identifies that in the **waste sector, the main identified sources of methane** are uncontrolled emissions of landfill gas in landfill sites, **the treatment of sewage sludge** and leaks from biogas plants due to poor design or maintenance

### Water and marine -related elements:

The Strategy mentions that, in the current Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and Sewage Sludge Directive, greenhouse gas emissions are not explicitly addressed. The **implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive has already helped to prevent significant methane emissions** due to the collection and treatment of wastewater in efficient centralised facilities. These facilities emit significantly less methane and other greenhouse gases than alternative treatment approaches

In parallel to the impact assessment on the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Strategy confirms that the Commission will carry out a study to support the **evaluation of the Sewage Sludge Directive**. It will also carry out an additional study that will assess the scope for **further action on greenhouse-gas emissions**, including methane from sewage sludge

Based on the outcomes of the evaluation of the Sewage Sludge Directive and further research and the impact assessment for the revision of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Commission will **consider taking measures to limit the emission** of greenhouse gases from sewage sludge

## Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability – Towards a Toxic-Free Environment COM (2020) 667 final

### Summary:

The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability is part of the EU's zero pollution ambition, which is a key commitment of the European Green Deal.

The EU's chemicals strategy aims to:

- better protect citizens and the environment
- boost innovation for safe and sustainable chemicals

Actions:

- banning the most harmful chemicals in consumer products - allowing their use only where essential
- account for the cocktail effect of chemicals when assessing risks from chemicals
- phasing out the use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the EU, unless their use is essential
- boosting the investment and innovative capacity for production and use of chemicals that are safe and sustainable by design, and throughout their life cycle
- promoting the EU's resilience of supply and sustainability of critical chemicals
- establishing a simpler “one substance one assessment” process for the risk and hazard assessment of chemicals
- playing a leading role globally by championing and promoting high standards and not exporting chemicals banned in the EU.

### Water and marine -related elements:

The Commission will ensure the development, commercialisation, deployment and uptake of safe and sustainable-by-design substances

The Commission will establish, in close cooperation with stakeholders, **Key Performance Indicators** to measure the industrial transition towards the production of safe and sustainable chemicals

To achieve safe products and non-toxic material cycles, the Commission will support investments in sustainable innovations that can **decontaminate waste streams**

With the aim of greening the production of chemicals, the Commission will support, through its financial instruments and research and innovation programmes, the research, development and deployment of low-carbon and **low environmental impact chemical and material production processes**

On **endocrine disruptors**, the Commission will propose to establish legally binding hazard identification, ensure that endocrine disruptors are banned in consumer products as soon as they are identified, introduce them as substances of very high concern under REACH, ensure that sufficient and appropriate information is made available to authorities, and accelerate the development and uptake of methods to generate information through screening and testing of substances

On **chemical mixtures**, the Commission will introduce or reinforce provisions to take account of the combination effects in other relevant legislation, such as **legislation on water** (by 2022), food additives, toys, food contact material, detergents and cosmetics

Actions towards zero chemical pollution **in natural environment**, the Commission will:

- propose new hazard classes and criteria in the **CLP Regulation** to fully address environmental

toxicity, persistency, mobility and bioaccumulation

- introduce **endocrine disruptors, persistent, mobile and toxic** and **very persistent and very mobile substances** as categories of substances of very high concern;
- ensure that the information made available to authorities on substances allows **comprehensive environmental risk assessments** by strengthening requirements across legislation;
- address the impact on the environment of the **production and use of pharmaceuticals** in the upcoming Pharmaceuticals Strategy for Europe;
- support research and development for **decontamination solutions** in terrestrial and **aquatic environments**;
- reinforce the **regulation of chemical contaminants in food** to ensure a high level of human health protection

The Commission proposes a comprehensive set of actions to address the use of and contamination with PFAS. Those aim to ensure, in particular, that **the use of PFAS is phased out in the EU**, unless it is proven essential for society. Actions on PFAS include:

- Review of the annexes of the **Environmental Quality Standards Directive** and of the **Groundwater Directive** to add PFAS where possible as a group (by 2022)
- Proposal to address the emissions of PFAS from the waste stage including through the **revision of the legislation on sewage sludge** (by 2023)

The Commission will establish a coordination mechanism within the Commission to agree and synchronise, to the extent possible, actions across chemical legislation as regards hazard identification/classification and risk assessment and oversee the process towards '**one substance, one assessment**'

On coordination and simplification of legislation, the Commission will rationalise the use of expertise and resources by proposing the reattribution of technical and scientific work on chemicals performed under the relevant pieces of legislation to European agencies, including work of the SCHEER and SCCS

On methodologies and data, the Commission will [...]:

- develop a common open data platform on chemicals to facilitate the sharing, access and re-use of **information on chemicals coming from all sources** (*including WFD monitoring*)
- promote reuse and harmonisation of human and environmental health-based limit values (*including EQS*) among EU risk assessors and managers through a centralised and curated EU repository
- enable EU and national authorities to commission **testing and monitoring of substances** as part of the regulatory framework when further information is considered necessary

The Commission will assess how to best introduce information requirements under REACH on the overall **environmental footprint of chemicals**, including on emissions of greenhouse gases (*emissions to water included*)

The Commission will provide financial support for EU-wide **human and environmental (bio)monitoring** capacities, complementing ecosystem monitoring initiatives (*including aquatic monitoring*)

The EU will strive for the adoption of **global strategic objectives and targets** for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 to reflect life cycle approaches for chemicals, in line with the post-2020 global biodiversity targets