

Nota resumen respuestas CE preguntas escritas Parlamento Europeo (13/03 a 26/03/20)

A continuación, se recogen las respuestas de la Comisión Europea publicadas entre el 13/03/21 y el 26/03/21 a preguntas planteadas por el Parlamento Europeo.

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Cambio climático y medio ambiente

Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment

See question(s) : [P-000529/2021](#)

Radosław Sikorski (PPE)

Polish legislation does not regulate with sufficient clarity the matter of assessing compliance with Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment in a situation whereby urban waste-water from agglomerations is treated in an industrial waste-water treatment plant in which sewage from installations which require an integrated permit – other than biodegradable industrial waste-water – is treated. This applies, for example, to the treatment of urban waste-water from agglomerations which is treated in waste-water treatment plants in the pulp and paper industry.

The definition of the final discharge point used in the Polish legislation is stricter than that which appears in the Directive. On the basis of Article 86(3)(3) of the Water Act, an urban waste-water treatment plant in an agglomeration or a waste-water treatment plant in a neighbouring agglomeration is considered to be such a point.

1. Could the definition of the final discharge point which appears in the Polish legislation be extended to include an industrial waste-water treatment plant located outside an agglomeration if the amount of urban waste-water from the agglomeration does not exceed 10% of the total waste-water treated in the plant?
2. If so, could a mixture of such waste-water meet the parameters for an integrated permit issued for an industrial plant and constitute 'industrial waste water' within the meaning of Article 2 point 3 of Council Directive 91/271/EEC, i.e. "industrial waste water" means any waste water which is discharged from premises used for carrying on any trade or industry, other than domestic waste water and run-off rain water'?

Answer to a written question - Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment - P-000529/2021(ASW)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission

The scope of the term 'discharge point' defined in national legislation depends on the Member State. The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD)⁽¹⁾ covers agglomerations above 2000 p.e. whereas the term 'agglomeration' refers to an area where the population and/or economic activities are sufficiently concentrated for urban waste water to be collected and conducted to an urban waste water treatment plant or to a final discharge point. The question posed by the Honourable Member refers to waste water treated in industrial treatment plants under a permit issued by Member State competent authorities as required under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED)⁽²⁾. The corresponding discharge points would be those associated to the industrial treatment plant. The provisions of the UWWTD do not apply to the final discharge of an industrial waste water treatment plant in such case.

Industrial pulp and paper plants are covered by point 6.1⁽³⁾ of IED Annex I. Best Available Techniques (BAT)⁽⁴⁾ conclusions for this sector⁽⁵⁾ set emission levels for direct waste water discharges. Plants that are under the scope of the IED are required to operate in accordance with the permits, issued by the Member States' competent authorities, which contain Emission Limit Values based on the abovementioned BAT conclusions. According to IED Articles 14(1) and 15(1), the setting of these Emission Limit Values shall not consider the dilution caused by the urban waste water.

(1) Council Directive of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste water treatment (91/271/EEC), OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40-52.

(2) Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control), OJ L 334, 17.12.2010, p. 17-119.

(3) Point 6.1 of Annex I of Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) addresses production in industrial installations of: a) pulp from timber or other fibrous materials, b) paper or card board with a production capacity exceeding 20 tonnes per day, c) one or more of the following wood-based panels: oriented strand board, particleboard or fibreboard with a production capacity exceeding 600m³ per day.

(4) Best Available Techniques (BAT) means the most effective and advanced techniques, developed on a scale allowing implementation in the relevant industrial sector, under economically and technically viable conditions

(5) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOL_2014_284_R_0017

Inclusion of industrial water in the treatment of urban waste water

See question(s) : [E-000321/2021](#)

Sirpa Pietikäinen (PPE)

The environmental permits for industrial installations in EU Member States on the Baltic Sea do not mention any emission limit values for waste water if the emissions are diverted to waste water treatment plants. The industrial installation and waste water treatment plant enter into an agreement concerning the reception and purification of waste water.

This procedure poses several problems. Firstly, according to Article 14 of Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions, limit values should always be established in the permit. Article 15 of the Directive states that where it is a matter of indirect releases of polluting substances into water, the requirement of a water treatment plant may be taken into account when determining emission limit values. Limit values may not, however, simply be ignored in a permit.

Secondly, the procedure does not fulfil the requirement in Article 11 of Directive 91/271/EEC concerning urban waste water treatment regarding the discharge of industrial waste water subject to regulation. According to the article, the discharge of industrial waste water into waste water treatment plants is subject to prior regulations and/or specific authorisations. Agreements concerning industrial waste water between private concerns are not covered under such regulations.

Thirdly, the procedure leads to practical problems that compromise not only the objectives of the Directives referred to here but also the objective of achieving the good environmental status objective referred to in Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water

policy. Urban waste water treatment plants cannot deal with all the substances found in industrial waste water, and industrial waste water causes disruption to the purification process. As a result, the nutrient load at waste water treatment plants increases, and harmful substances flow into water bodies and the sea. Sludge can also deteriorate and cause pollution. Nor may industrial installations necessarily recover their costs for water uses as required in Article 9 of the Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

How does the Commission intend to address the unsatisfactory implementation in the Baltic countries of the Directive on industrial emissions, the Directive concerning urban waste water treatment and the Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy?

[Answer to a written question – Inclusion of industrial water in the treatment of urban waste water – E-000321/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission (16.3.2021)

Article 11 of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD)¹ requires that the discharge of industrial waste water within the scope of the UWWTD is subject to prior regulations and/or specific authorisations. There is no requirement in the UWWTD on emission limit values (ELVs) for industrial waste water covered by the UWWTD.

According to Article 15(1) of the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED)², ELVs apply to both direct and indirect releases at the point where emissions leave the installation. When determining ELVs for indirect releases of pollutants to water, the effect of a downstream waste water treatment plant may be taken into account, provided that it guarantees a level of protection of the environment equivalent with that provided by ELVs for direct releases. The Member States' competent authorities are primarily responsible to apply this provision. Whilst the Commission is aware that Member States experience problems in implementing this provision, it is not aware of a systematic failure to do so. The need for clarifying this provision is being assessed as part of the review of the IED ongoing under the European Green Deal³.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD)⁴ requires Member States to ensure good status of all water bodies on their territories by 2027 at the latest. To that end, Member States have to adopt programs of measures to address, inter alia, point and diffuse sources of pollution, including from urban waste water treatment plants. Measures are set out in River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), which have to be reported to the Commission every six years. The Commission is currently exchanging with individual Member States, including the Baltic Sea countries, to follow up on its recommendations on the second RBMPs⁵.

¹ Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste-water treatment, OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40–52.

2 Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control), OJ L 334, 17.12.2010, p. 17–119.

3 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

4 Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1–73.

5 https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/impl_reports.htm

The importance of plant-based alternatives in the shift to a more sustainable food production model

See question(s) : [E-000086/2021](#)

Sylwia Spurek (Verts/ALE), Francisco Guerreiro (Verts/ALE), Manuela Ripa (Verts/ALE), Eleonora Evi (Verts/ALE), Alexis Georgoulis (The Left)

Parliament recently rejected a number of amendments aimed at limiting the use of meat-related names for plant-based alternatives. It is indispensable to recognise that transitioning from the current food production model to a more sustainable alternative is crucial to tackling climate change, protecting people's health, and increasing safeguards for consumer rights. A recent Greenpeace report ('Farming for failure') enumerated a number of important policy recommendations regarding the shift to more plant-based diets. The Commission also recognised the importance of plant-based alternatives in a special report on the development of plant proteins in the EU published in 2018.

1. How is the Commission planning to incentivise farmers to shift from animal to plant-based production?
2. Is the Commission planning to introduce policies promoting and supporting, including supporting by financial means, plant-based food production, and if so, how will they be formulated to ensure implementation by all EU countries?
3. Where does the Commission stand on meat produced by means of cellular agriculture? Is it going to support such innovations?

[Answer to a written question – The importance of plant-based alternatives in the shift to a more sustainable food production model – E-000086/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Wojciechowski on behalf of the European Commission

The current Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) already provides several instruments that directly or indirectly support protein crops in the EU, such as greening, rural development programmes and voluntary coupled support.

In the Farm to Fork Strategy⁽¹⁾, the Commission presented a plan for the transition to a sustainable food system. Due to their positive impact on the environment, protein plants will have an important role to play in this transition.

Under the future CAP, it is proposed that Member States will have the possibility to include, in their CAP strategic plans, interventions under sectoral programmes that could support the protein crops sector. Moreover, in the framework of the eco-schemes, the Commission proposes to reward agricultural practices that promote protein plants, such as crop rotation with leguminous crops.

The Commission is undertaking a review of the promotion policy, with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption, and in line with the shift to a more plant-based diet.

Cultured meat technology is still under development and, according to the novel food Regulation⁽²⁾, the placing on the market of any novel food shall be authorised by the Commission based on a positive European Food Safety Authority evaluation with regard to the effects of the novel food on human health. Currently, no novel food containing cultured meat is authorised.

The Commission is supporting research and innovation activities on protein crops through EIP-AGRI⁽³⁾ and projects under Horizon 2020⁽⁴⁾. Research projects concerning cultured meat are also funded under Horizon 2020⁽⁵⁾. The future Horizon Europe will further support research in these areas, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy.

⁽¹⁾ COM/2020/381 – <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on novel foods, amending Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EC) No 258/97 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1852/2001. OJ L 327, 11.12.2015, p. 1

⁽³⁾ Agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI): <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/european-innovation-partnership-agricultural>

⁽⁴⁾ LegValue project (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/727672>) and TRUE project (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/727973>).

⁽⁵⁾ Cultured Beef project (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/790236>) and Meat4all project (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/958660>).

Economic consequences of the Green Deal for the EU

See question(s) : [E-000376/2021](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-room/detail/2021/03/E-000376/2021)

Catherine Griset (ID)

A study by the United States Department of Agriculture has estimated that if the EU is the only party to implement the Green Deal, its introduction would cause EU agricultural production to fall by 12 % by 2030 and would drain its competitiveness on domestic and export markets, leading to price rises and serious financial hardship for farmers, the main parties affected, who would suffer an estimated 16 % loss in income.

The Commission will certainly have taken good note of these forecasts. Will it now respond to concerns by publishing an impact study in its turn or at least furnishing targeted figures? Should it refuse to do so, can it say why?

[Answer to a written question – Economic consequences of the Green Deal for the EU – E-000376/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission

The Farm to Fork Strategy⁽¹⁾ sets out the path towards sustainable food systems. The quantitative targets contained in the strategy express political commitment, based on ambitious but realistic pathways. In accordance with better regulation guidelines, the Commission will carry out impact assessments to support the legislative proposals announced in the strategy, including those that make any of the targets legally binding. All relevant parties will be actively involved in preparing these proposals from the outset.

The Commission will monitor the cumulative impact of the actions foreseen for the strategy on competitiveness, the environment and health and this will inform future reviews.

The Commission takes note of the United States Department of Agriculture findings regarding the impact of the Farm to Fork Strategy but does not share its conclusions. The study ignores the effects of the Farm to Fork Strategy on productivity growth, reducing food demand by its ambition to curb food waste and losses and by a shift towards healthy, balanced and sustainable diets.

⁽¹⁾COM(2020) 381 final.

Impact of the proposed emissions trading system (ETS) extension

See question(s) : [E-006182/2020](#)

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE)

Could the Commission please present concrete figures on expected job losses in the EU aviation industry, the EU maritime sector and the sectors dependent on them in the event that the EU unilaterally extends its aviation emission trading system (ETS) to international flights and the maritime sector without major international aviation/shipping hubs in third countries adopting the same approach?

How many jobs in aviation would be lost in Paris, Amsterdam or Frankfurt to the profit of Istanbul, Dubai or even London, and how many port jobs in Rotterdam, Hamburg, Valencia and Piraeus would be lost to Shanghai, Singapore or Felixstowe?

[Answer to a written question - Impact of the proposed emissions trading system \(ETS\) extension - E-006182/2020\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Schmit on behalf of the European Commission

On 17 September 2020, the Commission published its communication to step up Europe's climate ambition through an EU-wide, economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030 compared to 1990 of at least 55% (the 2030 Climate Target Plan)⁽¹⁾. The communication envisages the extension of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) to also cover the maritime sector and reduce the free allowances allocated to airlines.

Labour market and related social impacts of climate action are at the forefront of the Commission's analytical efforts. The Commission is currently carrying out assessments and public consultations to analyse the economic, social and environmental impacts of a number of initiatives to support the enhanced 2030 climate and energy framework, including a possible amendment of the ETS. At this stage, it is not possible to provide indications on possible job losses in Europe related to specific sectoral initiatives such as the ETS revision, let alone regarding specific airports or ports.

Overall, the impact assessment underlying the 2030 Climate Target Plan demonstrates positive overall employment effects, including through the use of ETS revenues, while labour reallocation between sectors and regions can be expected, which underlines the importance of timely reskilling and upskilling.

Finally, the Commission has highlighted the importance of fair transitions in its communication on A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions⁽²⁾ in January 2020. In this context, a number of financial instruments are available to support those affected by the transition including EU structural funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and the Just Transition Mechanism.

⁽¹⁾Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition – Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people, COM(2020) 562 final.

⁽²⁾Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions COM(2020) 14 final.

Persisting food waste

See question(s) : [E-006952/2020](#)

Daniel Buda (PPE)

Every year tonnes of still-edible food goes to waste, when millions of people worldwide are facing starvation. An FAO survey shows that 1.3 billion tonnes of food produced for consumption are lost or wasted along the supply chains.

What does the improper discarding and storing of 1.3 billion tonnes of food actually mean? Fridges which are 30% emptier, an increase in hunger in disadvantaged countries, economic losses of USD 1 trillion, a

depletion of the resources needed for food production and an increase in the potential for global warming caused by greenhouse gases from the discarded food.

1. What solutions does the Commission have in mind to limit this chain economic, ethical and environmental impact?
2. What is the Commission's future strategy for educating European consumers?

[Answer to a written question – Persisting food waste – E-006952/2020\(ASW\)](#)

[Answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission](#)

EU waste legislation⁽¹⁾ requires Member States to take measures to reduce food waste at each stage of the food supply chain, to adopt specific waste prevention programmes and to monitor and assess the implementation of their food waste prevention measures by measuring annually the food waste levels, based on a methodology adopted in 2019⁽²⁾. As a key action under the Farm to Fork Strategy⁽³⁾, the Commission will put forward proposals to:

- Revise EU rules on date marking ('use by' and 'best before' dates) to avoid food waste linked to misunderstanding of the meaning of these dates (2022);
- Adopt binding EU-level targets for food waste reduction (2023).

The Commission has supported research and innovation projects aimed at food loss and waste prevention from primary production to consumers under Horizon 2020⁽⁴⁾ ⁽⁵⁾ ⁽⁶⁾. This will continue under the new Programme Horizon Europe.

While consumer education is a matter of national competence, the Commission facilitates sharing of experience/best practice in food waste prevention, notably through the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste⁽⁷⁾.

This includes an assessment of the effectiveness of prevention actions⁽⁸⁾, sharing of educational materials⁽⁹⁾. Relevant EU funding programmes also support implementation of awareness raising campaigns and educational programmes.

The EU works with partner governments and the private sector to reduce food losses in developing countries, for instance by improving crop protection and storage facilities.

⁽¹⁾ Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109).

⁽²⁾ Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2019/1597 of 3 May 2019 supplementing Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards a common methodology and minimum quality requirements for the uniform measurement of levels of food waste (OJ L 248, 27.9.2019, p. 77).

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en

⁽⁴⁾ REFRESH – <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/641933>

⁽⁵⁾ FOODRUS – <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101000617>

⁽⁶⁾ LOWINFOOD – <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101000439>

⁽⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste/eu_actions/eu-platform_en

(8) Assessment of food waste prevention actions (JRC Technical Report, 2019)
https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/fs_eu-actions_eu-platform_jrc-assess-fw.pdf

(9) https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste_en

The European Green Deal and exports of European waste to third countries

See question(s) : [E-006390/2020](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-006390-2020)

Kosma Złotowski (ECR)

Studies carried out by Irish universities have shown that almost half of Europe's plastic waste is exported, mainly to South-east Asia, where recycling infrastructure is so poor and overburdened that ultimately 31% of the plastic is not recycled and a quarter of it ends up in the oceans⁽¹⁾. A similar mechanism exists with old cars when their poor technical condition and non-compliance with pollution standards means that in Europe they should be scrapped. It appears that as many as 80% of them continue to be driven, but outside the EU. The high targets for waste recycling and the ambitious goals of the European Green Deal will certainly increase the export of waste beyond the EU's borders.

1. What action is the Commission taking to reduce exports of waste, including old cars, to Third World countries?
2. Is the Commission not afraid that the increase in exports of European waste to developing countries is having a very bad impact on the image of the EU, which aims to be a role model in terms of ecology and recycling?
3. What action is the Commission taking at international level to support developing countries in the area of waste disposal and to neutralise the impact from Europe's waste exports, including the polluting of the oceans with plastic?

(1) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412020318481#s0125>

Answer to a written question – The European Green Deal and exports of European waste to third countries – E-006390/2020(ASW)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission

The Commission is well aware of the problem raised by the Honourable Member. In recent years, a number of third countries have announced that they would restrict or ban the import of waste into their territory.

In 2019, the EU exported around 30 millions tonnes of waste. An important share of this waste was shipped to countries which do not have the same environmental and human health requirements as the EU when it comes to waste treatment.

This problem has been identified in the context of the European Green Deal⁽¹⁾ and in the new Circular Economy Action Plan⁽²⁾, which called to restrict EU waste exports to third countries.

The Commission plans i.a. to revise the Waste Shipment Regulation⁽³⁾, which sets out the EU rules on export of all waste, and intends to table a legislative proposal to this effect in 2021⁽⁴⁾.

The EU introduced in December 2020 new rules on the shipments of plastic waste⁽⁵⁾, which ban the export of unsorted plastic waste to countries other than the members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In addition, the Commission started to work on the review of the rules relating to the treatment and export of end-of-life vehicles, with a view to table a proposal in 2022⁽⁶⁾.

The Commission also supports the efforts made at the international level to better monitor international trade in waste and improve its management, notably in the context of the Basel Convention and the United Nations (UN) Environmental Assembly.

The EU provides financial support to improve waste management and tackle waste trafficking, either bilaterally to low-income EU partner countries, or multilaterally, for instance through the Basel Convention, the UN Environmental Programme and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

⁽¹⁾https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

⁽²⁾<https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/>

⁽³⁾Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2006 on shipments of waste, OJ L 190, 12.7.2006, p. 1-98.

⁽⁴⁾More information on this review can be found here : https://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/shipments/review_of_the_wsr.htm

⁽⁵⁾https://ec.europa.eu/environment/news/plastic-waste-shipments-new-eu-rules-importing-and-exporting-plastic-waste-2020-12-22_en

⁽⁶⁾<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12633-Revision-of-EU-legislation-on-end-of-life-vehicles>

Ban on imports of waste into China

See question(s) : [E-006989/2020](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-questions/question-detail/E-006989/2020)

Marco Dreosto (ID)

Until now, the People's Republic of China has managed almost half of global waste, from all over the world (most of it plastic waste), but since 2017 it has been gradually reducing the volume of waste admitted from other countries.

The Chinese Government has now announced a total ban on imports of waste to be processed, starting on 1 January, and this has very serious consequences for the European Union.

In recent years, because of the objective lack of facilities (particularly in the countries of southern Europe), in the EU there has also been an increase in cases of illegal disposal, fires in storage depots and the sending of materials to countries where environmental safeguards are poor.

In view of the above, can the Commission say how it plans to tackle this situation, which is likely to develop in the near future into a real global emergency, for instance through specific co-partnership projects with Member States for the identification of new waste treatment facilities within the boundaries of the EU?

[Answer to a written question – Ban on imports of waste into China – E-006989/2020\(ASW\)](#)

[Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission](#)

The Commission is aware of the challenges created by the decision of the Chinese authorities to ban the import of solid waste in line with their 2017 policy to restrict such imports.

The Commission made it clear in the Green Deal⁽¹⁾ that the EU should take greater responsibility for its waste and stop exporting it. The Commission is planning a comprehensive review of the EU waste shipments rules in 2021⁽²⁾, which will take account of the global context and the Green Deal objectives.

Processing waste in the EU represents important opportunities for the transition to a circular economy in Europe, it is needed to attain the ambitious EU waste legislation targets⁽³⁾ and requires investments in waste infrastructure and facilities in Member States.

As set out in the new Circular Economy Action Plan⁽⁴⁾, the Commission will harness the potential of EU financing instruments to support investments for the transition to a circular economy. This includes funding available under the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-2027⁽⁵⁾.

In addition, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)⁽⁶⁾ can support modernising waste management systems. This includes innovative and advanced solutions for separate collection, sorting, reuse and recycling, as well as fostering the development and adoption of circular economy innovations.

The Commission is encouraging Member States to support reforms and investment accelerating the transition to the circular economy as part of their recovery and resilience plans.

⁽¹⁾https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

⁽²⁾For more information on this review: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/shipments/review_of_the_wsr.htm

⁽³⁾E.g. Directive (EU) 2018/851 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109 and Directive (EU) 2018/850 amending Directive 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 100.

⁽⁴⁾<https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/>

⁽⁵⁾https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027_en

⁽⁶⁾which is the key instrument at the heart of the EUR 750 billion NextGenerationEU, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

Air pollution in the city of Madrid

See question(s) : [E-000371/2021](#), [E-000379/2021](#)

Javi López (S&D)

The Lancet Planetary Health has just published a study of 858 European cities by the Instituto de Salud Global de Barcelona (ISGlobal) which concludes that the Madrid metropolitan area is the urban area on the continent with the highest rate of mortality related to exposure to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution. The study maintains that if all the cities could achieve the same readings for air quality as the least polluted one, more than 79 000 premature deaths could be prevented every year through the reduction in NO₂ exposure.

Bearing in mind that implementing the European Green Deal is the Commission's priority for this term in office, and that reducing air pollution by setting its zero pollution action plan in motion forms part of this:

1. Does the Commission believe that Madrid's local and regional governments are implementing the policies needed for air pollution in the area to be reduced?
2. What steps is the Commission considering taking to ensure that effective air pollution policies are implemented and to prevent the adverse effects air pollution has on human health?

Madrid: the European city with most deaths due to pollution

See question(s) : [E-000371/2021](#), [E-000379/2021](#)

Sira Rego (The Left)

Answer to a written question – Air pollution in the city of Madrid – E-000371/2021(ASW)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission (16.3.2021)

The Ambient Air Quality Directive¹ requires Member States to ensure that, throughout their zones and agglomerations, EU air quality standards are met – including that limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are not exceeded. Where these limit values are exceeded, the Directive requires Member States to prepare and implement air quality plans and measures. Guided by the principle of subsidiarity, the Directive leaves the choice of means to achieve these standards to the Member States, but does explicitly require that exceedance periods are kept as short as possible.

The Commission is aware of air pollution in Madrid and continues to take decisive action on the matter. The Commission recalls that it decided on 25 July 2019² to refer Spain to the Court of Justice of the EU for exceedances of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) limit values set out in the Directive.

The Commission will continue to work in partnership with all Member States to achieve the agreed air quality standards as soon as possible. Related policy efforts of the EU as specified in the Commission's Communication of May 2018 on 'A Europe that protects: Clean air for all'³ remain high on the agenda.

Furthermore, the Commission is making available significant EU funding to support measures to improve air quality.

In line with the mandate from the European Green Deal⁴ and specifically the EU's zero pollution ambition⁵, the Commission will draw on the lessons learnt from the evaluation of the current air quality legislation⁶ and will propose to strengthen provisions on monitoring⁷, modelling and air quality plans to help local authorities achieve cleaner air. The Commission will notably propose to revise air quality standards to align them more closely with the World Health Organization recommendations.

1 Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe, OJ L 152, 11.6.2008, p. 1–44.

2 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_4256

3 COM(2018) 330 final.

4 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

5 https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/zero-pollution-action-plan_en

6 Fitness check of the Ambient Air Quality Directives SWD(2019) 427 final. 7 Including by making use of new monitoring opportunities provided by digitalisation

Just Transition Fund

See question(s) : [E-000186/2021](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/E-000186/2021)

Cornelia Ernst (The Left), Martina Michels (The Left)

After preliminary agreement in the trilogue negotiations on the Just Transition Fund was reached, there should be nothing to stand in the way of its swift implementation in the Member States under the partnership principle.

As at 28 December 2020, at least one of Germany's Land governments impacted by the coal phase-out still did not know which administrative authorities will be responsible for the Fund and which authorities and partners will be involved in drawing up the territorial plans under the partnership principle.

A statement by the Federal Government suggests that it will use money from the Fund to fulfil commitments under the law on structural improvements in coal-mining regions (StStG), possibly by transferring money from the Fund to this commitment, the amount of which will be unchanged.

In a number of decisions the German Länder have rejected both the transfer of money and the implementation of support by means of a federal programme.

1. When is the earliest that the regions affected might expect the approval and payment of money from the Fund to take place?
2. What measures will the Commission take to ensure full and immediate compliance at local level with the partnership principle with the aim of securing programming which will fulfil regional requirements?

3. In line with what specific stipulations would the transfer of money from the Fund to already made and quantified Federal Government financial commitments under the StStG be consistent with the principle of additionality⁽¹⁾?

⁽¹⁾https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/de/policy/what/glossary/a/additionality/

Answer to a written question – Just Transition Fund – E-000186/2021(ASW)

Answer given by Ms Ferreira on behalf of the European Commission

Resources under the Just Transition Fund will be available to Member States when the territorial just transition plans identifying the territories the most negatively impacted by the socioeconomic costs of the transition towards a climate-neutral EU economy by 2050 will have been adopted, together with the corresponding programmes. They may be adopted upon the entry into force of the regulation for the Just Transition Fund expectedly around mid-2021.

Under the partnership principle that underpins Cohesion policy, Member States must involve the relevant local and regional authorities of the territories concerned for the preparation of the territorial just transition plans⁽¹⁾. Pursuant to Article 7(2)(f) of the Just Transition Fund Regulation, a description of the governance mechanisms consisting of the partnership arrangements needs to be included in the plans.

In order to optimise the impact of the Just Transition Fund and ensure all aspects of a just transition, the Fund's resources should reinforce national policy response rather than replace the national budget foreseen for the implementation of the Strukturstärkungsgesetz (StStG⁽²⁾) in the territories also targeted by the Fund.

These national budgetary resources may nonetheless contribute to support provided in the framework of Just Transition Fund programmes, in the form of national co-financing. Moreover, the focus of the StStG is mainly on infrastructural measures, while the Just Transition Fund's focus and scope go beyond this.

The Common Provisions Regulation does not include requirements in terms of assessing additionality.

⁽¹⁾According to Recital 14 of the Just Transition Fund Regulation, as agreed in December by the co-legislators, 'Member States should prepare, in social dialogue and cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, in accordance with the partnership principle established by Article 6 of Regulation (EU) .../... [new CPR], and supported by the Commission, territorial just transition plans, detailing the transition process, consistently with their National Energy and Climate Plans.'

⁽²⁾https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav#_bgbl_%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl120s1795.pdf%27%5D_1612263712346

Urgent need for a new action plan to combat wildlife trafficking

See question(s) : [P-000726/2021](#)

Francisco Guerreiro (Verts/ALE)

In 2016 the Commission implemented an action plan against wildlife trafficking which was based on a raft of instruments in diplomacy, trade and development cooperation.

As well as threatening the survival of many species, this crime engenders corruption, loss of life and armed conflict.

The action plan, based on preventing trafficking and reducing the supply of and demand for illegal wildlife products, stepping up the fight against organised crime and strengthening cooperation between countries of origin, destination and transit, expired in 2020.

1. Is there any mechanism to continue implementing the aforementioned measures until such time as a new plan is in place, and will updating the CITES in line with recent scientific knowledge be considered?
2. Is the Commission considering adopting a positive list, indicating which species can be considered as pets, given that the EU is currently only regulating trafficking in species covered by the CITES Convention or the Regulation on invasive alien species?

[Answer to a written question - Urgent need for a new action plan to combat wildlife trafficking - P-000726/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission

While the 2016 Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking⁽¹⁾ was planned to be applied until 2020, it has not as such formally expired at the end of 2020, and nothing prevents the actions in there from being continued. Many of those actions are in any case of a continuous nature and do not necessarily depend on the action plan for their implementation. The Commission is also continuing to play its role in coordinating implementation of the action plan, in particular through meetings of the EU Enforcement Group. In parallel, the evaluation of the action plan is progressing, also in view of its revision, as announced in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030⁽²⁾.

The Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)⁽³⁾ and the annexes to the corresponding EU Regulation⁽⁴⁾ were updated in 2019, during and after the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. A further update of the EU Annexes is currently being prepared by the Commission, to bring them in line with more recent scientific advice, in particular from the EU Scientific Review Group⁽⁵⁾.

Moving towards an EU-wide positive list of animal species authorised as pets in international trade would be a systemic change and would require corresponding changes to international rules, in particular CITES. The Commission is therefore not planning to unilaterally work on a positive list.

(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12117-Wildlife-trafficking-EU-action-plan-evaluation->

(2) https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm

(3) <https://cites.org/eng>

(4) Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein, OJ L 61, 3.3.1997, p. 1-69.

(5) Established in accordance with Article 17 of the aforementioned Regulation.

Ambrosia as an invasive species in Europe

See question(s) : [E-000280/2021](#)

Ska Keller (Verts/ALE)

Ambrosia artemisiifolia is native to North America and is a widespread species which has been brought to Europe and has spread across large areas of the continent. Not only its pollen but also skin contact with the flower heads can trigger serious allergies in humans.

Under Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1141, the Commission is compiling a list of invasive alien species of Union concern. According to a research project financed by the Commission (Final report: ENV.B2/ETU/2010/0037), *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* is such a species. It does not, however, feature in the list.

1. What reasons does the Commission give for *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* not appearing in the list of invasive alien species of Union concern?
2. What steps need to be taken in order for *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* to be included in the list?
3. What further action will the Commission take to prevent *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* from becoming more widespread in the European Union and to protect and support Union citizens, for example allergy sufferers, but also farmers, who are affected by it?

[Answer to a written question - Ambrosia as an invasive species in Europe - E-000280/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission

The common ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* has already been considered for inclusion on the list of invasive alien species of Union concern. According to the available evidence, including the study referred to in the question, the species has a severe impact on human health due to its high allergenic potential. It is also an important crop weed in parts of Europe. However, the available evidence suggests that the species has very little impact on biodiversity or the related ecosystem services, which is the focus of Regulation (EU) 1143/2014⁽¹⁾. It was therefore concluded that it does not meet the criteria for inclusion on the list as set out under Article 4(3) of the regulation, in particular paragraph 4(3)(c). In evaluating these criteria, the Commission is assisted by the Committee on invasive alien species, which also needs to provide a positive opinion to the inclusion of species on the list.

The EU has financed several research projects⁽²⁾ that helped to increase the understanding of the problems caused by the species and provided guidance for combating it. Furthermore, the directive on undesirable substances in animal feed⁽³⁾ has established measures as regards the presence of seeds of common ragweed in feed materials and compound feed containing unground grains and seeds. These measures are in force since 1 January 2012 and since then there have been several Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)⁽⁴⁾ notifications on the presence of seeds of common ragweed in sorghum and bird feed, contributing to avoiding the further spread of common ragweed in the EU.

(1) Article 1, . Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, OJ L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 35-55.

(2) E.g. <https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/6e993b56-cd9c-4a59-9d2c-3b950b040103/F%20Final%20project%20report%20and%20general%20publication%20of%20project%20findings.pdf>; <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/red-alert-ragweed-allergy>; http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/docs/Final_Final_Report.pdf

(3) Directive 2002/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 May 2002 on undesirable substances in animal feed — Council statement, OJ L 140, 30.5.2002, p. 10-22.

(4) https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/rasff_en

Link between biodiversity loss and the increasing spread of zoonotic diseases

See question(s) : [E-000204/2021](#)

Joanna Kopcińska (ECR)

The COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the world in 2020, and no satisfactory solution has yet been found for the epidemiological crisis. However, the pandemic is helping to raise awareness of the risks and dramatic consequences associated with the emergence of zoonotic diseases.

Understanding how biodiversity affects the transmission of pathogens has long been a central issue among those who study diseases.

A December 2020 in-depth analysis, drafted at the request of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and titled 'The link between biodiversity loss and the increasing spread of zoonotic diseases' presents examples of zoonotic diseases occurring outside their original native habitats (bovine tuberculosis, leishmaniasis, plague, etc.) and gives examples of zoonotic diseases that have been transmitted between animals and humans (SARS, bird flu, Hendra virus and COVID-19).

The Commission Communication 'Building a European Health Union: Stronger crisis preparedness and response for Europe' of 11 November 2020 states unequivocally that the likelihood of recurrent outbreaks of infectious diseases is increasing and that long-term trends, such as antimicrobial resistance and pressures on biodiversity and climate change, are steadily accelerating. Both of these are associated with a growing threat of infectious diseases worldwide.

Given the interdependent character of the analysis and the communication, is the Commission considering further realistic financial plans to support the development of national laboratory systems dealing with animal and human pathogens, which would improve coordination on consolidated microbiological testing standards at European level?

[Answer to a written question - Link between biodiversity loss and the increasing spread of zoonotic diseases - E-000204/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission (19.3.2021)

The Commission acknowledges that implementing a One Health-based approach recognising the interaction between human and animal health and the environment is absolutely needed to address cross border threats to health and loss of biodiversity. An EU coordinated system of surveillance of pathogens, in particular of the zoonotic ones, is instrumental to achieve this objective. With the new EU budget for 2021-2027, the Commission will continue to support long-term actions aiming to coordinate monitoring of zoonotic diseases. The Commission will in particular continue to finance the functioning of an efficient network of EU reference laboratories in the food and animal health sectors in order to promote uniform practices and reliability of methods of analysis, tests and diagnosis in every Member State.

Furthermore, the proposal for a Regulation on cross-border health threats¹ outlines the implementation of EU reference laboratories in the area of public health. It proposes that the Commission may designate EU reference laboratories to provide support to national reference laboratories to promote good practice and alignment by Member States on a voluntary basis on diagnostics, testing methods, use of certain tests for the uniform surveillance, notification and reporting of diseases by Member States. The network of EU reference laboratories would be operated and coordinated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

Under the Framework Programme Horizon Europe, funding will be provided for research and innovation to support surveillance, prevention and response to emerging zoonoses, addressing the different pillars of One Health.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/proposal-regulation-cross-border-threats-health_en.pdf

Abandonment of the Ebro Delta and non-compliance with the Habitats Directive

See question(s) : [E-000474/2021](#)

[María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos \(Renew\)](#), [Jordi Cañas \(Renew\)](#)

The Ebro Delta is a biosphere reserve that has been a part of the Natura Network since 1998. Since then, there has been a decline in habitats of priority Community interest: 70 hectares of wetlands and dunes have been submerged and the mouth of the Ebro has shrunk by more than 60%. The Ebro Delta's current regression, subsidence and salinisation mean that its rich biodiversity, as well as the homes and survival of more than 50 000 people, is at considerable risk.

Managing the Ebro Delta is complex and requires a solid balance underpinned by clear plans of action. Residents and local councils have condemned the fact that the Habitats Directive has not been complied with and the Natura 2000 network has been neglected because of disagreements between the Generalitat and the government. These disputes are blocking the implementation of necessary measures and are delaying the investment planned for a recovery of the protected areas.

1. Does the Commission intend to take specific action following the negligence and inaction by the authorities and the Generalitat?
2. Has the Commission assessed the extent to which the Habitats Directive has not been complied with and the harmful effects that this is having on the conservation of the Ebro Delta?

[Answer to a written question – Abandonment of the Ebro Delta and non-compliance with the Habitats Directive – E-000474/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission (22.3.2021)

The Ebro Delta has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive¹ and as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Birds Directive².

According to the Habitats Directive, Member States shall establish the necessary conservation measures, which correspond to the ecological requirements of the habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the SACs. In addition, Member States must take appropriate steps to avoid, in Natura 2000 areas, the deterioration of the habitats types and habitats of species as well as significant disturbance of the species for which the sites have been designated.

Without prejudice to the Commission's powers as guardian of the Treaties, Member States are primarily responsible for the adoption and implementation of these measures.

The Commission pursues the gaps identified in the implementation of the Habitats Directive in Spain in an infringement procedure³ that covers, among others, the Ebro Delta SAC. Regarding this area, the Commission is currently assessing the latest reply from the competent regional authorities in Catalonia. The Commission also included specific recommendations for Spain⁴ in relation to objectives and monitoring for Protected Areas, in its report⁵ on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD)⁶. The Commission is currently working with Member States on effective sediment management to ensure compliance with the WFD.

1 Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

2 Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7–25.

3 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/INF_20_1212

4 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=SWD:2019:42:FIN&qid=1551205988853&from=EN>

5 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/impl_reports.htm

6 Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p.1-73.

Fragmentation of European rivers is major threat to biodiversity

See question(s) : [E-000155/2021](#)

Aurelia Beigneux (ID)

Europe is criss-crossed by many rivers. River ecosystems provide a habitat for flora and fauna which are sometimes native to a particular region. Rivers also play an essential role in regional development – a fact to which the many mills and factories built next to rivers over the centuries bear witness.

A study conducted as part of the Amber programme was published on 16 December 2020 in *Nature*⁽¹⁾. Its findings are alarming: our continent's rivers are fragmented by many barriers. The study identified 1.2 million barriers over the 1.65 million km long river network. This figure does not tell the whole story, as countries are not aware of all the barriers obstructing watercourses, in part because no up-to-date maps are available.

Biodiversity suffers greatly as a result of this fragmentation: the pools which form have an impact on macroinvertebrate communities and boost the proliferation of plankton, with the result that planktivorous species flourish, reducing fauna diversity. Moreover, these barriers lead to a build-up of sediment in rivers and riparian woodland.

What action does the Commission intend to take in view of the preliminary findings of this Europe-wide study?

⁽¹⁾Belletti, B., Garcia de Leaniz, C., Jones, J. et al, 'More than one million barriers fragment Europe's rivers', *Nature* 588, 436-441 (2020).

[Answer to a written question - Fragmentation of European rivers is major threat to biodiversity - E-000155/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission (22.3.2021)

The Commission is familiar with the results of the Amber study¹. River fragmentation represents indeed a significant pressure on the state of river ecosystems and exerts impacts on fish population.

This is why the Water Framework Directive (WFD)² requires Member States to implement all measures necessary to achieve good ecological status of rivers, including measures to restore river continuity. However, the WFD also recognises that certain barriers, serving a useful and justified purpose, can be maintained under certain conditions³. In these cases, mitigation measures, tailored to the characteristics of the site concerned, must be taken to reduce as far as possible the impact of the barrier on river continuity. Such mitigation measures could include technical solutions to ensure fish migration, sufficient water flow and sediment transport, and appropriate habitats for aquatic species.

A recent fitness check⁴ found the EU regulatory framework for the fresh-water ecosystems to be largely 'fit for purpose' and ambitious, whilst underlining the need for stepping up its implementation and enforcement. The Commission is following up on this through horizontal enquiries sent to all Member States. Furthermore, the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy⁵ sets out targets to restore freshwater ecosystems and the natural functions of rivers, to achieve the WFD objectives. Amongst others, the Strategy commits to achieve the restoration, by 2030, of at least 25 000 km of rivers into free-flowing ones through the removal of primarily obsolete barriers and the restoration of floodplains and wetlands. The Commission will provide by the end of 2021 technical guidance to help Member States identify sites for restoration and mobilise appropriate funding.

1 Belletti, B., Garcia de Leaniz, C., Jones, J. et al., 'More than one million barriers fragment Europe's rivers', Nature 588, 436-441 (2020).

2 Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1-73.

3 According to article 4(3) of WFD, Member States have to designate as Artificial or Heavily Modified, those water bodies where reverting to the hydromorphological characteristics of the body necessary to achieve good ecological status would negatively impact, inter alia, the wider environment; navigation; activities for the purposes of which water is stored; water regulation, flood protection, land drainage.

4 Fitness Check of EU Water Legislation (SWD(2019) 439 final).

5 EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives (COM(2020) 380 final).

Energía

Sin preguntas y respuestas en esta ocasión

Industria

Protection of the EU sugar production sector and its workers

See question(s) : [P-001033/2021](#)

Biljana Borzan (S&D)

The end of the quota system for sugar production in 2017 pushed the EU sugar sector into crisis. The releasing of its production potential has led to it being linked to international prices, which are currently low. This has resulted in closures of factories all over the EU and loss of employment for workers.

The future of the EU sugar industry will be compromised if a new sugar policy is not introduced in the short term. There must be collective thinking and action: the EU cannot turn its back on its responsibilities with regard to the security of its sugar supplies and the future of the sector.

1. What is the Commission's view of the effects of the abolition of the sugar quota on the EU sugar sector?
2. Is it planning to take steps to protect sugar production in the EU and jobs that are dependent on it?

[Answer to a written question - Protection of the EU sugar production sector and its workers - P-001033/2021\(ASW\)](#)

Answer given by Mr Wojciechowski on behalf of the European Commission (22.3.2021)

1. The Commission is well aware of the difficulties faced by the sugar sector after the abolition of sugar quotas, in its transition to a more market-oriented system. These difficulties, including factory closures and loss of jobs, are part of the adjustment to the new operating environment following the latest reform. The EU sugar prices have been aligned with world prices in the last few years but maintained a premium of around EUR 40 per tonne. At EU level, the limited sugar availability in the near term should continue to provide support to the EU prices. In the medium term, EU sugar production is expected to increase again, reaching 16.2 million tonnes in 2030, which could make the EU self-sufficient and potentially a net exporter of sugar¹.

2. The EU sugar sector has not shown major imbalances to date. The production for marketing year 2020/21 is estimated to be rather low, around 14.6 million tonnes, which is considered sufficient to cover most of the EU's consumption. In addition, the amount of imported sugar into the EU has declined compared to previous marketing years. Globally, lower sugar production and trade difficulties have supported the world sugar prices, which reached a four-year high in February. The average EU sugar price has risen to EUR 379 in December 2020, EUR 67 higher than the lowest level registered in January 2019. The Commission continues to monitor the evolution of the market closely and carefully.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/agricultural-outlook-2020-report_en.pdf
