



Lithuanian EU Presidency 2013

Policy Briefing

MARINE

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

During the Lithuanian Presidency the Council will aim to finalise its general approach on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and will start the triologue negotiations between the three institutions on the file. The Council should ensure a good agreement, which should be in line with the Common Fisheries Policy reform. The reform should end the subsidizing of overfishing and reverse the collapse of our marine environment, fish stocks and fishing communities.

The agreement on EMFF should ensure that:

- Member States have the flexibility to spend more EMFF funding on data collection, and on control and enforcement measures.
- EU financial assistance is conditional upon compliance with the CFP reform, as well as with relevant environmental legislation, namely the Birds, Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives.
- No public aid is given to measures that could increase the EU fishing fleet capacity, such as new jobs, new fishing vessels, modernization, engine replacement and temporary and permanent cessation of fishing activities.
- Aid for aquaculture is only targeted towards environmentally sustainable aquaculture, such as extensive (rather than intensive) aquaculture and fish ponds that deliver environmental objectives.
- Public funding should support public goods, such as nature conservation and restoration, fish stock recovery areas and research on more selective gear.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive

The Council will also aim to agree on a general approach on the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive and start the triologue negotiations. While improving the governance of European seas is important, it is crucial to keep environmental objectives at the heart of the new legislation. Maritime spatial planning can be used as a tool to ensure that marine ecosystems are fully considered in decisions that affect the use of coastal and marine space and ecosystem services.

The Council, with the lead from the Lithuanian presidency, should ensure that:

- The MSP Directive is in line with the objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Strategic Environment Assessment Directive, and has the environment as a core objective.
- The Directive will be based on the ecosystem-approach and precautionary principle and not just pursue the blue growth agenda regardless of environmental constraints.



LAND USE

EU Forest Strategy

As requested by the European Parliament, the European Commission is developing a new strategy for forests. The strategy should provide a vision for forests that addresses the opportunities and challenges for forests and forestry, balancing wood production and the creation of new jobs with critical protection for biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services..

The Lithuanian Presidency should ensure that:

- The European Commission release as soon as possible the Communication to the European Parliament and the European Council;
- The negotiations in the European Council on the next Forest Strategy are launched. These negotiations should fulfil the vision for sustainable and multifunctional forest management;
- The necessary processes for developing a new Forest Action Plan are begun; and
- Adequate public participation is ensured during the development of the new Forest Action Plan.

The new Strategy aims to connect different EU policies and obligations. The Lithuanian Presidency should work with the European Commission to:

- Make sure the Strategy is balanced, and does not only focus on wood production;
- Respect the limits of what EU forests can provide (by introducing the principles of “reduced consumption” and “resource efficiency”);
- Ensure safeguards for the short and long term by including concrete, measurable targets and indicators; and
- Make sure there is a coherence and coordination at an EU and national level, while negative policies and initiatives for forests are minimized.

Common Agricultural Policy

The Implementing Regulations for the Common Agricultural Policy are likely to be published by the end of the Lithuanian Presidency. Given the flaws in the already agreed CAP, it is vital that the detail of the Implementing Regulations helps and does not hinder the achievement of environmental outcomes from agriculture.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Lithuanian Presidency should push for an improved position on the reform of the EIA Directive. The Commission’s proposal takes steps in the right direction. The Presidency should:

- Amend the Directive to have an explicit objective to protect ‘biodiversity’ (not just ‘flora’ and ‘fauna’);
- Introduce measures to ensure the quality of environmental information supplied by developers, such as: EU-level guidance on biodiversity surveys and impact prediction; requirements to use independent assessment teams; legal requirement on Member States to ensure information is good quality;
- Simplify and harmonise screening decisions by further detailing criteria and thresholds in the EIA Directive. Caveats must remain in place to ensure that projects are screened in which have very significant effects on the environment, for example in sensitive areas, even when they do not reach pre-established thresholds;

- Make early scoping mandatory for all EIAs;
- Require Member States to inform the public of EIA procedures and decisions in effective ways that better enable public participation;
- Require assessment of alternatives, including assessment of a ‘most environmentally beneficial option’;
- Require application of the mitigation hierarchy so that negative impacts are avoided where possible, minimised elsewhere and fully compensated for where necessary, to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and a net gain where possible;
- Introduce specific requirements for environmental monitoring in EIA follow-up, and requirements for corrective action where developments result in net biodiversity loss.

BIODIVERSITY

Invasive Alien Species

The Lithuanian Presidency looks set to preside over the publication and commencement of negotiations on the long awaited EU legislative instrument to tackle the impacts of invasive alien species. The Commission made a commitment to publish this legislation in its 2012 work programme, but delays within the Commission have repeatedly pushed publication back, and the legislation is not expected before September 2013.

Invasive alien species remain one of the main EU and global threats to biodiversity, as well as a significant economic burden. Conservative estimates from 2009 put the cost of invasive species to the EU at €12bn per year, and this has almost certainly increased as a result of newly arrived invasive species. The Lithuanian presidency will have a key role to play in progressing the Commission’s legislative proposals as rapidly as possible through co-decision, with a view to achieving a first reading in this parliament, and swift adoption of the legislation in the next parliament. Further delays will only exacerbate the damage already caused, and further put back achievement of the EU’s biodiversity conservation objectives.

CLIMATE CHANGE

2030 Climate and Energy Package

When the Commission’s consultation on the 2030 package concludes, the Lithuanian Presidency should push the Council to take an early, ambitious approach to developing a proposal for three binding climate targets for 2030 and beyond.

Biofuels and Indirect Land Use Change

The EU Bioenergy targets have been widely shown to be self-defeating. They lead to increased emissions, large-scale harm to biodiversity and threats to vulnerable human populations through disruption of food markets. A main problem is that current policies incentivize the use of agricultural land, while ignoring the indirect land use change (ILUC) caused by the displacement of food crops.

The European Commission has made a proposal to cap the use of crop-based biofuels but has failed to propose honest accounting of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from biofuels. The European Council is in the middle of forming its position, with a compromise proposed by the Irish Presidency in June. The compromise weakens the proposal from the Commission and must be strengthened. It will be crucial for the Lithuanian Presidency to get a final position out of the council and come forward with a constructive stance. Parliament is expected to have a final position in the autumn.

The Presidency should push the European Council to approve amendments to the Renewable Energy and Fuel Quality Directives which:

- Cap the use of biofuels from agricultural land at 5%;
- Introduces robust ILUC factors, in both the RED and FQD to properly account for emissions caused by displacement of land; and
- Make sure that only genuine sustainable renewables such as renewable electricity and true advanced biofuels from waste products are incentivized.

Biomass sustainability and climate impacts

The European Commission is hugely overdue in proposing sustainability standards on the use of biomass for energy. Europe already produces half its renewable energy from burning mainly forest based biomass. This is set to continue until 2020 when bioenergy will account for around 10% of the total energy sources in the EU.

This rapid expansion in biomass consumption and harvesting is happening outside any framework that could ensure environmental and social sustainability and against a backdrop of serious doubts over the actual delivery of emission savings. Indeed it is now clear that much of current biomass use is leading to increased emissions.

The Lithuanian Presidency must work with the European Commission to address the sustainability concerns associated with this biomass use in order to:

- Elaborate a method to ensure that the carbon released when biomass is burned is fully accounted for and included in calculations of emission reductions compared to fossil fuels over a 20 year time period. Only biomass delivering genuine reductions should be supported.
- Ensure that whole trees are not felled for wood pellet production and that all forests from which biomass is sourced are certified and sustainably managed, and biodiversity is not adversely impacted.
- Promote the use of genuine waste products for biomass burning without creating perverse incentives which lead to negative impacts on forests and their biodiversity.

Contact Information

BirdLife Europe
Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy
e-mail: ariel.brunner@birdlife.org
<http://europe.birdlife.org>

Lithuanian Ornithological Society (LOD)
Liutauras Raudonikis, Director
e-mail : liutauras.raudonikis@birdlife.lt
<http://www.birdlife.lt>

