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Press kit FPEU

Informal Meetings of Environment
and Energy Ministers

Amiens, from 20 to 22 January 2022



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The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union

What does the presidency of the Council of the European Union involve?

A rotating presidency

Each Member State holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months on a rotating basis. From 1 January to 30 June 2022, France holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Presidency of the Council organises meetings, brokers compromises, submits conclusions and ensures the coherency as well as the continuity of the decision-making process. It ensures proper cooperation between all Member States and acts as a liaison between the Council and the European institutions, in particular the Commission and European Parliament.

What is the Council of the European Union?

Also called the "Council of Ministers", or simply "the Council", the Council of the European Union brings together the ministers of the EU Member States who meet in configurations by sector of activity. Together with the European Parliament, it serves as the co-legislator of the European Union.

Concretely, ministers will chair ten configurations of the Council of the EU: general affairs; economic and financial affairs; justice and home affairs; employment, social policy, health and consumer protection policy; competitiveness (internal market, industry, research and space); transport, telecommunications and energy; agriculture and fisheries; environment; education, youth, culture and sport; and trade. The Foreign Affairs Council is an exception; it is chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, currently Mr Josep Borrell.

The Council also holds budgetary powers; it adopts and amends the European budget with the Parliament. Lastly, the Council adopts certain decisions as well as non-binding recommendations, concludes international agreements on behalf of the EU, and appoints members of certain institutions such as the European Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions. The Council's deliberations and votes on legislative texts are public.

Into what framework does the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union fit?

The French Presidency of the Council of the EU builds on the vision for a sovereign, united and democratic Europe laid out by the President of the French Republic in his address given on 26 September 2017 at the Sorbonne University. For four years, the President and French Government have been working to build true European sovereignty, namely Europe's ability to act in today's world to defend our values and interests. The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union will continue this work to promote a more united, sovereign and democratic Europe.

The French Presidency aims to meet citizens' expectations, which were expressed during citizen debates held in September throughout the 18 French regions as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe. This project, which France put forward in 2019, opened up a new space for discussion with European citizens. The final contribution of these citizen panels was submitted to the Government last autumn. Recommendations made by citizens, in France and in Europe, have helped determine the priorities of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The French Presidency is linked with the presidency Trio programme, with which France aligns its action. This system, in place since 2009, sets long-term goals and defines the main topics to be addressed over a period of 18 months. Following the Slovenian Presidency, France is beginning a new cycle and will work as a trio with the Czech Republic in the second half of 2022 and with Sweden in the first half of 2023.

Nearly 400 events

In total, nearly 400 events are planned in France and the EU throughout the Presidency, including political meetings, a cultural programme and citizen events open to all.

The Council of the European Union is not to be confused with:

- *The European Council, which is composed of the Heads of State or Government of its Member States and defines the general policy priorities and directions for the European Union. Its current president is Charles Michel.*
- *The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation made up of 47 Member States. Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe serves to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its seat is in Strasbourg and its Secretary-General is Marija Pejčinović Burić.*

Informal Meetings of Environment and Energy Ministers

This informal meeting will be made up of a series of sessions dedicated to environmental challenges, attended by environment ministers, and a series dedicated to energy challenges attended by energy ministers.

All of the ministers will meet for two joint sessions: one on the role of forests and the wood industry in climate, energy and environmental policies and one on the "just transition".

Environmental challenges

Protecting natural environments and improving human health will be central to the environment ministers' talks. The first session will focus on **European action regarding phytosanitary products**. In its "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity" strategies, the European Union set itself the goal of cutting pesticide use in half by 2030. Achieving this goal means collectively carrying out the agroecological transition, in particular by ensuring that imported foodstuffs are produced in compliance with EU environmental and health standards. The focus of the discussions will be best practices in the EU Member States concerning the implementation of measures to reduce plant protection product use and the provisions to be incorporated into a harmonised European framework. The ministers will also address measures to ensure Europe's objectives are respected in matters of imports of foodstuffs treated using plant protection products. They will also have the opportunity to discuss the need to ensure that dangerous chemicals banned on the internal market are not produced for export outside the EU.

Talks will then hone in on the **EU's chemicals strategy for sustainability**. Several pivotal texts will be recast by the end of 2022, including the Reach Regulation and the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulation ("CLP

Regulation"). Other projects on the agenda will include examining measures to stop dangerous chemicals banned in the EU being produced for export. Ministerial debates will identify measures to be taken to effectively implement the **chemical management framework for the protection of the environment and public health (the "One Health" approach)**.

The third item on the environment ministers' agenda is the **fight against imported deforestation**. The Commission published a proposal for a regulation on 17 November 2021 that aims to prevent goods from supply chains associated with deforestation and forest degradation from being imported into the EU. This draft regulation also aims to increase European demand for deforestation-free products. During this informal ministerial meeting, the environment ministers will highlight best practices, products and ecosystems to prioritise as well as cooperation with third countries, with the aim of **ensuring that European action against deforestation is as effective as possible**.

Energy matters

As for the energy ministers, they will continue ongoing debates that began in the European Council and the Council of Ministers, **on protecting consumers from extremely volatile**

and historically high gas and electricity prices, while pursuing the Union's climate goals. The **primacy of energy efficiency**, a principle based on reducing energy consumption and waste as a key lever, must be more systematically taken into account in public policy. Building this principle into other national and European climate change policies will be at the heart of the ministers' talks whether they concern combatting energy precarity, security of supply, innovation or competitiveness. Furthermore, the energy ministers will examine the outline for the **new hydrogen economy**: how to speed up the development of **low-carbon hydrogen**, while addressing current uncertainty regarding the technological difficulty of producing it and its place in Europe's energy mix in the future.

Two joint sessions on energy and the environment

The Environment Ministers and Energy Ministers will also meet to discuss closely overlapping climate, environment and energy challenges. In the first joint session, together they will define **the role in these policies of forests and the forestry sector and how to juggle the various challenges they face**. This will namely concern enhancing carbon sinks and increasing renewable energy production. Forests are at the heart of the European Green Deal and the EU's transition to carbon neutrality. Lastly, the ministers will consider the **principles of the just transition and a green transition that is socially acceptable**. The transition to a carbon-free economy and society involves major transformations that will change how we consume, produce, work, exchange and coexist. For it to be a success, Europe must ensure it is a **socially just and inclusive** transition that meets the needs of **the most vulnerable people and places in society**.

Agenda

› Thursday 20 January

10:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

- Environment delegations arrive at the principal site of the informal meetings, the Mégacité conference centre (101, avenue de l'Hippodrome, 80000 Amiens).
- Formal welcome of the Environment Ministers
- Doorstep statements by the Environment Ministers

10:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

First working session of the Environment Ministers
Theme: The agroecological transition: EU coherence and harmonisation concerning plant protection products

1:00 p.m.–2:45 p.m.

Working lunch with the Environment Ministers
Theme: Implementing the European sustainability strategy in the field of chemical products

3:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Second working session of the Environment Ministers
Theme: Combatting imported deforestation

5:30 p.m.–6:15 p.m.

Guided tour of the Cathedral of Amiens

7:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

Open visit of the Musée de Picardie (2 Rue Puvis de Chavannes, 80000 Amiens)

8:00 p.m.–9:30 p.m.

Working dinner at the Musée de Picardie

➤ Friday 21st January

9:45 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

Tour of the company Ynsect by the Environment Ministers

11:00 a.m.–11:35 a.m.

- Environment and Energy delegations arrive at the main site of the informal meetings, the Mégacité conference centre (101, avenue de l'Hippodrome, 80000 Amiens).
- Formal welcome of the Energy Ministers
- Doorstep statements by the Energy Ministers

11:45 a.m.–12:10 p.m.

Family photo

12:20 p.m.–2:20 p.m.

Joint working lunch with the Environment and Energy Ministers

Theme: The just transition

2:45 p.m.–5:45 p.m.

Joint working session with the Environment and Energy Ministers

Theme: The role of forests and the wood sector in environmental, energy and climate policies

5:30 p.m.–6:15 p.m.

Guided tour of the Cathedral of Amiens (Energy Ministers)

5:15 p.m.–5:50 p.m.

Exit doorstep statements by the Environment Ministers

5:45 p.m.–6:30 p.m.

Press conference by Barbara Pompili, Minister for the Ecological Transition

8:00 p.m.–9:45 p.m.

Working dinner at the Prefecture of the Somme (Energy Ministers)

➤ Saturday 22nd January

8:30 a.m.

Greeting of delegations

9:00 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

First working session of the Energy Ministers

Theme: Energy prices for European consumers

11:00 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

Second working session of the Energy Ministers

Theme: Energy efficiency

1:00 p.m.–2:45 p.m.

Working lunch of the Energy Ministers

Theme: Hydrogen in Europe

2:45 p.m.

Exit doorstep statements by the Energy Ministers

3:15 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Press conference by Barbara Pompili, Minister for the Ecological Transition

The participants

The Environment Ministers and Energy Ministers of the 27 EU Member States and Norway (or their representatives)

Pascal CANFIN

MEP, Chair of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Cristian-Silviu BUȘOI

MEP, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

Frans TIMMERMANS

First Vice President of the European Commission

Virginijus SINKEVIČIUS

European Commissioner for the Environment

Kadri SIMSON

European Commissioner for Energy

Hans BRUYNINCKX

Executive Director of the European Environment Agency

Fatih BIROL

Executive Director of the International Energy Agency

Christian-Pilgaard ZINGLERSEN

Director of ACER, the EU's Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators

A representative of the General Secretariat of the Council

Jeremy WATES

Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau

Amiens, the city hosting the informal meetings of the Environment and Energy Ministers

The spire of the Cathedral of Amiens and the Tour Perret skyscraper look over the city of Amiens in the Hauts-de-France region. Amiens is a walkable city, perfect to discover on foot, beginning with a visit of the Amiens Cathedral. 2020 saw the commemoration of 800 years since the beginning of the construction of this masterpiece of Gothic statuary, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

At the foot of the cathedral, don't miss the medieval district of Saint-Leu, with the charming façades of its narrow houses built along the Somme. Today, the neighbourhood is an ideal place to go for a stroll and explore its bars, restaurants, antique stores and artisan boutiques.

The Hortillonnages, or floating gardens of Amiens, are another must-see of the city. Every Saturday morning, local market gardeners called hortillons supply the market with their produce.

Amiens additionally offers cultural experiences including the Musée de Picardie and the Maison Jules Verne, where the writer, an active member of the local community, lived for the last 34 years of his life. The Mégacité Amiens is a venue offering 25,000 m² of space.

➤ Click here to visit Amiens : www.amiens-tourisme.com

Find all of the news on the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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