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EU Live Issues

Soil Protection Framework Directive

In 2006 the Soil Protection Framework Directive proposed by the European Commission, broadly supported by the European Parliament, was blocked in the Council by a blocking minority (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK).

Background

UEPG, although recognising the valuable resource that soil represents and working actively to restore European soils, habitats and species, had strong reservations concerning this proposal, and especially on Annex II, "List of potentially soil polluting activities", which included "Mining installations not covered by Council Directive 96/82/EC, including extractive waste facilities as defined in Directive 2006/21/EC". UEPG - together with other NEEIP members - had lobbied against this proposal, on the basis of the subsidiarity principle.

The Framework Directive had been blocked, but soil, being a non-renewable resource, the topic fits into the EC Resource Efficiency Strategy. It fits as well into the ecosystem services vision that leads today's discussions on the environment policies. This allows the European Commission to try new approaches to obtain an EU soil legislation, which might be undertaken through other policies, e.g. biodiversity or land-use.

Soil Remediation and Soil Sealing

On 10 and 11 May 2012, a conference on "Soil Remediation and Soil Sealing" took place in Brussels. Topics addressed included preliminary results on a EC study giving an overview on the state of play of soil protection in EU Member States; soil pollution and its impact on environment, including biodiversity, water and human health; soil sealing and its impact on food production; the application of the "polluter pays principle".

Highlights

A representative from the French Ministry of Environment indicated no opposition to EU legislation on soil any longer, provided that there was a greater concern for cost control.

Pia Bucella (Director, Nature Directorate, DG Environment) underlined that since the Soil Protection Framework Directive had been proposed, some developments - including the change in public perception, the adoption of national legislations on the topic, and the growing concern over land-use - had taken place which justified to put the topic on the agenda again. Land footprint was offering good perspectives as a policy tool.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik underlined that a Framework Directive would allow lots of room for manoeuvre for Member States and respect the subsidiarity principle. He also stated: "I am (...) considering putting forward some ideas on land use in 2014. (...) In the meantime, we can already make some preliminary strategic considerations. And I haven't given up on Soil Framework Directive. Maybe 7th EAP (Environment Action Programme) could be a moment for a renewed commitment!"

Sandrine Bélier MEP (Greens, France) re-emphasised the commitment of the EU Parliament to obtain an EU Framework Directive, as it was shown during the vote on the 7th EAP.

Next steps

UEPG will contact the Danish and upcoming Cypriot EU Presidency whether it is intended to bring the Soil Protection Framework Directive back on the agenda.

Resource Efficiency

In January 2011, the European Commission issued a Communication on "A resource-efficient Europe. This was followed in September 2011 by the publication of the Roadmap towards Resource Efficiency.



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The Roadmap states that the specific risks of minerals, including security of supply, are addressed in the EU Raw Materials Strategy. However, it also tackles a number of key issues important to the Aggregates industry, including market-based instruments; indicators; recycling, ecosystem services & biodiversity; water, air, land and soil; marine resources.

The European Parliament Environment Committee launched an own-initiative report, drafted by Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy's (ALDE, Netherlands). On 25 April, the European Parliament Environment Committee adopted the EP report on "A resource-efficient Europe".

European Parliament vote in Plenary

On 24 May 2012, the European Parliament adopted in Plenary the above report, with a large majority of 479 votes in favour, 66 against and 63 abstentions.

Among the key messages for the Aggregates Industry, the European Parliament

- Calls on a ban on waste landfilling in Europe, by the end of the decade, in a bid to increase the recycling. They urged the Commission to revise the 2020 recycling targets set in the Waste Framework Directive, and recommended landfill tax;
- Calls on the Commission to establish Joint Task Forces for the three key areas of food and drink, housing, and mobility in order to develop, as soon as possible, European Resource Efficiency Action Plans with clear resource reduction actions;
- Urges the Commission and the Member States to agree, by 2013, on clear, robust and measurable indicators for economic activity that take account of climate change, biodiversity and resource efficiency from a life-cycle perspective, for example in the form of a basket of four resource use indicators, namely land footprint, water footprint, material footprint and carbon footprint, and to use these indicators as a basis for legislative initiatives and concrete reduction targets;
- Calls on the Commission to propose an extension of the scope of the eco-design directive to non-energy related products;
- Urges the Member States to make a shift towards environmental taxation, emphasising

that this should allow for cuts in other taxes such as those on labour;

- Urges the Commission to examine the effects of a tax on resources and virgin raw materials.

Next steps

The link between this strategy and the 7th Environmental Action Programme is being clearly made, and UEPG will monitor the development of this Programme.

DG Environment is setting up a Resource Efficiency Platform to which UEPG has been invited to participate (first meeting should take place in June 2012).

UEPG has been developing an Environment Product Declaration (EPD) in order to estimate the environmental impact of natural, marine and recycled aggregates. This EPD should be a useful tool to demonstrate the little footprint of the industry.

UEPG, together with the European Platform for Recycled Aggregates (EPRA) is promoting an End of Waste criteria in line with what is being developed in some Member States (UK Protocols for example).

UEPG believes 'that a tax on mineral resources is not an appropriate fiscal tool for increasing resource efficiency' and will keep advocating this message.

Green Week 2012

This year's Green Week focused on water.



From left: **Richard Seeber**, MEP, President EP Water Group, **Janez Potočnik**, Commissioner for Environment, EC and **Karl Falkenberg**, Director-General for Environment, EC

At the opening session, high level speakers – including Environment Director General Karl Falkenberg - underlined good progress achieved through implementation of EU legislation, especially concerning water quality.

Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Blueprint

In 2000 the WFD established a legal basis to protect and restore clean water across Europe, but met during the implementation process challenges which threatened the achievement of EU policy goals.

In order to overcome these obstacles, EU policy on water scarcity and droughts will be reviewed by the "Blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources", to be released by November 2012. The Blueprint will include economic incentives for efficient management of water resources.

At the closing session on 25 May, Commissioner Potočnik summarised a few crucial measures that would favourably impact on Water availability and quality. Among them, Green infrastructures and pricing policies.

UEPG will closely monitor and promptly inform its members concerning the release of the Blueprint. More information on the Green Week 2012 is available on: <http://www.greenweek-2012.eu/>

UEPG News

UEPG key events in Limassol, Cyprus

The Cyprus Aggregates Producers Association (CAPA) kindly hosted the 2012 Entrepreneurs Forum and Delegates Assembly in Limassol, Cyprus, on May 24 and 25 respectively. There was a record attendance, with 55 UEPG representatives coming from 19 countries, with 60 people attending from CAPA. It is noteworthy that CAPA joined UEPG only in 2010, and is now a very active UEPG member, coincidentally the country, being located at the most easterly and southerly points of the European Union.

Entrepreneurs' Forum

The very topical Forum topic with both local and European context was "Resource Efficiency versus Locality", and was also very timely in view of Cyprus assuming the European Presidency in the second half of 2012.



There were important and highly relevant inputs from two Cypriot Ministries, as well as from the national geological, mining service, environment, air quality and labour departments, as well as presentations on technical and permitting aspects from CAPA members. There was consensus on the need to develop an aggregates plan for the future, as well towards adopting a "one-stop-shop" approach to permitting to ensure the future sustainable supply of aggregates for the rapidly-growing Cypriot economy. César Luaces Frades,

Director of the Spanish Aggregates Association (ANEFA), summarised his significant work on a SWOT analyses of and opinion surveys on the future European Aggregates Industry.

The Forum concluded with a afternoon visit to some very impressive local quarries.

Delegates Assembly

This year's Delegates Assembly was a milestone event, being the end of the 2009-2012 Presidency of Jim O'Brien, and the beginning of the 2012-2015 Presidency of Arnaud Colson.

UEPG newly elected President needs no introduction, being actively involved in the Association's life since many years. Director of Public Affairs, Environment and



Arnaud Colson, UEPG newly elected President

Mineral Resources at Lafarge (France), he just resigned as Chairman of the UEPG Environment Committee to take over the Presidency from Jim O'Brien.

The latter, who served as President for three years, was very warmly thanked by all delegates and received a standing ovation for his strong commitment to UEPG activities and objectives.

UEPG general secretariat expresses its gratitude to Jim O'Brien and wishes Arnaud Colson every success in fulfilling his duties.

The DA agenda included the traditional progress reviews of the Health & Safety, Environment, Technical and Economic Committees, as well as of the Biodiversity, Water Management, Marine Aggregates and PR & Communications Task Forces, all of which reported significant progress on many important issues. The Financial Report led to adoption of the 2013 budget. The Membership Report noted with great regret the loss of memberships of Italy and the Czech Republic, where every effort will be made to revitalise those memberships. Kunda Nordic was welcomed as a company associate member for Estonia, and the Israel Aggregates Association was welcomed as an affiliate member. As well as unanimously electing Arnaud Colson as President 2012-

2015, Nigel Jackson and Elisabeth Gammelsæter were elected as Vice-Presidents. The Board was also extended and strengthened, with Jim O'Brien continuing as Past-President.

Celebrating UEPG-25



This took the form of presentations on the highlights and special memories of each of the 9 UEPG presidencies. Carl Henrich covered the founding years and the presidencies of Raymond Berger and Erik Dam Hansen. Antony Fell covered the presidency of Tim Ross, as did Hans-Peter Braus for that of Michael Schulz, and César Luaces Frades for that of Cipriano Gomez Carrion. Finally Manfred Asamer, Didier Audibert, Denis Mertens and Jim O'Brien gave overviews of their respective presidencies. Those who have passed on were fondly remembered. Many happy memories were relived of those present, and the event demonstrated the huge commitment and dedication of all involved in founding and developing UEPG as the champion of the aggregates industry, thus laying a very solid foundation for the years ahead.

Signature of Letter of Intent with IUCN

Another milestone event was the signature of a Letter of Intent by the outgoing President, Jim O'Brien, with IUCN, represented by Monica Jacobs, head of the IUCN office in Brussels.

UEPG was the first industry association to sign up to IUCN's "Countdown 2010" campaign in 2007, and also was the first industry association to join the European Commission's Business@Biodiversity Platform in 2010.

UEPG has been well recognised by IUCN as representing an industry strongly committed to enhancing biodiversity. UEPG is convinced that its 24,000 quarries and pits across Europe are indeed biodiversity havens. However UEPG needs more biodiversity expertise, and for that reason sought stronger links with IUCN.

In parallel, IUCN wished to develop stronger links with biodiversity practitioners, particularly

with SMEs. Hence it was agreed to sign a Letter of Intent which would facilitate biannual meetings between UEPG and IUCN over the next three years, seeking to develop specific biodiversity projects.



Monica Jacobs for IUCN and Jim O'Brien for UEPG, signing the Letter of Intent

Recycled Aggregates

Partners of European Platform for Recycled Aggregates (EPRA) met on 16 May in the UEPG office in Brussels to discuss the revision of the Waste Framework Directive Annex III - Hazardous waste criteria; the End of Waste Criteria; the inclusion of recycled aggregates into the Environmental Product Declaration for Aggregates; Regulated Dangerous Substances and the development of a collection of best study practices. Presentations on the recycled aggregates industry in Poland and Finland were as well an interesting insight on the opportunities and challenges of the sector. The opportunity to organise a recycling facility visit for key European Commission representatives was discussed and positively welcomed.

Next steps

30 Oct. Next EPRA meeting, Brussels

Upcoming UEPG Meetings

- 12 June** RDS & EPD WG, Brussels
- 12 Sept.** PR & Communication TF and Biodiversity Indicators WG, Brussels
- 13 Sept.** Biodiversity TF and Water Management TF, Brussels
- 19 Sept.** Marine Aggregates TF, Brussels
- 10-11 Oct.** UEPG Committee meetings, Brussels
- 30 Oct.** EPRA meeting, Brussels
- 28 Nov.** European Minerals Forum, Brussels
- 29 Nov.** Board Meeting, Brussels