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EU Insight is edited by the UEPG General Secretariat as part of its communication service to UEPG Members

European Aggregates Association - UEPG aisbl

Rue d'Arlon 21 – B-1050 Brussels

Tel: +32 22 33 53 00

E-Mail: secretariat@uepg.eu

Internet: www.uepg.eu

EU Live Issues

Commission Work Programme 2015

The European Commission released on 16 December its [Work Programme for 2015](#). This includes a list of new initiatives (23), a list of withdrawal or modifications of pending initiatives (80) and a list of “refits” in an attempt to cut red tape. This is in sharp contrast with the Barroso Commission which – on an annual average – presented 300 new initiatives and withdrew only 30 proposals.

A website is also dedicated to the 2015 priorities: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/work-programme/index_en.htm

Implications for the Aggregates Industry

Investments: The European Commission will focus on a “New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment”. To this end, the Commission committed to deliver in 2015 an Investment Plan for Europe: the legislative follow-up to the Plan announced last month, unlocking public and private investments in the real economy of at least € 315 billion over the next three years.

Environmental Liability: The evaluation of the Environmental Liability Directive is confirmed and the report should be published in 2015.

Natura 2000: The Fitness Check of the Natura 2000 Directives is confirmed and due to end in 2016 – there is no reference to a potential merger of the two directives.

Standardisation: The Evaluation of the EU standardisation systems is planned to start in 2015.

Construction: The Fitness Check of the most relevant EU legislation impacting on the construction sector in the area of internal market and energy efficiency should start in 2015. The [tender](#) was recently published by

DG Enterprise & Industry and Construction Product Europe (CPE) will actively participate.

Circular Economy: The legislative proposal amending the Directives on waste, on packaging and packaging waste, on the landfill of waste, on end-of-life vehicles, on batteries and accumulators and electronic equipment will be withdrawn and replaced by a new, more ambitious proposal by the end of 2015.

Air quality: The proposal on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants will be modified as part of the legislative follow-up to the 2030 Energy and Climate Package. This means that Commissioners Cañete (Climate Action and Energy) will work together with Commissioner Vella (Environment) on this file.

Next steps

UEPG will work with CPE on the Fitness Check of the Construction sector.

While the withdrawal of the Circular Economy Package is a positive step forward, UEPG will keep opposing the lead indicator recommended by the European Commission measuring GDP per tonne of consumed raw material (GDP/RMC) and the resource productivity target aiming at least a 30 % increase in resource productivity.

UEPG will discuss the withdrawal of the proposal on waste at the next UEPG Recycling Task Force meeting on 3 February. UEPG will monitor closely new developments linked to this announcement, especially on Natura 2000.

Business@Biodiversity Platform

Sandrine Devos, UEPG Public Affairs Manager, attended the first Annual Business@Biodiversity Platform Conference which took place on 21 November in Brussels.

In his opening speech the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, stressed the key role of the B@B Platform as a vehicle to deliver the EU environmental agenda and to obtain a “Triple A” rating for the European environment. His presence shows the importance of the theme and of the Platform, as this was one of the first speeches of the new Environment Commissioner.



Following this opening speech, a panel of keynote speakers presented their perspective on the interconnections between business and biodiversity.

Next steps

The No Net Loss Initiative, expected in 2015, will also address themes and challenges identified during the work of the B@B Platform.

The Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF), expected to launch in early 2015, will invest in private projects demonstrating the attractiveness of pro-biodiversity investments in Green infrastructure, Payment for ecosystem services, or Biodiversity offsets.

No Net Loss

The EU has set itself the ambitious goal of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020, and restoring them as far as feasible. The EU biodiversity strategy requires that by 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems. The Commission has announced a 'no net loss' initiative by 2015 as part of a list of actions to reach this target.

François Wakenhut, Head of the Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Unit at DG

Environment, was the Guest of Honour of the UEPG Board Policy Dinner on 19 November in Brussels. In his position, François Wakenhut is leading on the upcoming No Net Loss (NNL) initiative, and presented to UEPG Board members the concept and the preliminary results of the public consultation.



François Wakenhut stated that the initiative was focusing on ordinary biodiversity and should not be looking at existing legislation, which confirms that it should not apply to Natura 2000 areas.

It was of outmost importance to encompass all the impacts, and therefore all the sectors, including agriculture and forestry.

The importance of the full mitigation hierarchy was reiterated, and compensation/offsetting should be a last resort. This aspect of the NNL Initiative was actually a dividing issue amongst biodiversity advocates, as it required a complicated set of right conditions to be effective, was technically difficult to implement, and raised questions on subsidiarity.

The German example of a compensation scheme (Bundeskompensationsverordnung) would serve as a model. The consultation had received about 700 replies which needed now to be carefully analysed.

A rich debate followed, where UEPG Board members reminded François Wakenhut that the Aggregates Industry had achieved a lot for biodiversity such as developing indicators, and making a large number of sites biodiversity havens. There should be an equal treatment between all sectors and proportionality in the actions requested.

UEPG Actions and next steps

UEPG is working closely with the Business@Biodiversity Platform and published a position paper on [Ecological Offsets](#).

The Commission had set up a Working Group composed of stakeholders to elaborate recommendations to the Commission, which finalised its tasks in July 2013. The non-energy extractive industries (NEEI) had been granted only one seat. Jim Rushworth, Vice-Chair of the UEPG Environment Committee, was this NEEI representative. He advocated that NNL should focus only on compensating (through restoration) for residual impacts. Thus it should not overlap with the mitigation aspects of existing legislation. UEPG provided a reply to the Public Consultation and will keep monitoring the upcoming developments.

Quarry Life Awards

The second edition of the HeidelbergCement international research contest on biodiversity in mining sites took place this year, and it raised again strong interest from students and researchers. In 22 countries on 4 continents over 390 interested candidates submitted a project proposal.



The International Ceremony to award the winners took place on 9 December in Prague. Participants included environmental managers, biologists, representatives of BirdLife International and its National Partners as well as many other environmental NGOs, politicians and Industry representatives. Sandrine Devos, from the UEPG General Secretariat, attended the event.

DG Mobility and Transport take action on Inland Ports

A 1st meeting of the Platform for Multi-modality took place on 12 November in Brussels. The objective is to make ports attractive for investments and to optimise the transportation chain. UEPG had been invited to explain how the aggregates industry would benefit from stronger waterways.

Case studies will be collected and another meeting will take place in March 2015.

Raw Material Strategy – EU projects

Minerals4EU

On 3 December, Jim O'Brien, Past-President and Miette Dechelle, Public Affairs Manager participated at the last 2014 Minerals4EU workshop's project in Brussels.

The Minerals4EU project is designed to meet the recommendations of the Raw Materials Strategy and will develop an EU Mineral Intelligence Network structure delivering a web portal, a European Minerals Yearbook and foresight studies. The meeting was focused on filling current data gaps, standardisation, the proposed website/paper format of the European Mineral Raw Materials Yearbook, and the future Sustainable Minerals Intelligence Network.

The Minerals4EU study is an EU Research project under the 7th Framework Program. It includes 31 partners coordinated by the Geological Surveys of Finland (GTK). For more information, see <http://www.minerals4eu.eu/>.

Raw Material System Analysis -Data Inventory

On 11 December, Miette Dechelle, Public Affairs Manager participated at a workshop on Data Inventory for a Raw Material System Analysis organised by the Paris based Consultant Bio by Deloitte. The Study is commissioned by DG Enterprise & Industry in the context of the EU Raw Materials Strategy.

This project was launched in February 2014 and will finish in September 2015. The project aims to build knowledge and understanding of the flows of raw materials in the EU. This will help identifying key opportunities to secure resources in the EU economy.

The scope of this project is the development of a full Material System Analysis (MSA) for 22 groups of materials (21 critical raw materials and aggregates as seen as 'essential materials') used in the EU-28. The aim of the workshop was to fill data gaps and better inform the consultant of the Aggregates Industry. Consequently a draft report will be produced for UEPG comments.

OSH Directives Evaluation Seminar

On 9 December, the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Directives' Evaluation Seminar was organised in Brussels, at which UEPG participated. The objective of this one-day seminar was specifically to allow key stakeholder organisations to give their views regarding the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of the EU OSH Directives as well as to identify possible suggestions for the improvements of the regulatory framework.

A series of workshops on 5 themes were organised over the day composed of Experts' Representatives of the Employers, Trade Unions, Members' States and the European Commission. The mentioned themes were on the effectiveness of the Directives, the management of the major ongoing risks of Muscular Skeleton Disorders (MSD) and psychosocial risks, maintenance of the relevance of the Directives, the best management of the chemical risks and the challenges of implementing the OSH within SMEs.

The first outcome of the discussions showed that stakeholders wanted to maintain the current framework directive on health and safety at work, despite some overlaps and contradictions between some OSH Directives.

The question was raised on merging the Chemical Agents Directive (CAD) and Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD), and an overall coherency with REACH, where views diverged.

The NePSi Agreement was presented as an example of good practice to control Respirable Crystalline Silica on site.

There was a general consensus that there was no need to change the asbestos directive and that this is a very unique issue which should be kept separate.

Regarding both MSD and psychosocial risks there were divergent views on whether information and guidance is the right approach (as recommended in the discussion paper and supported by employers) or whether legislation is necessary (called for by the trade unions).

Discussions with conflicting views were also on whether policy making should be based on evidence or the precautionary principle. It was argued that exemptions from legislation for SMEs would not achieve worker protection across the board and that uniform regulation is necessary for fair competition. However, employers pointed out that it is more important to look at whether certain provisions in legislation can actually be implemented in SMEs and really lead to worker protection.

Next Steps

The final outcome of the seminar and draft report of the evaluation will be presented on 20 January at the Evaluation OSH Directives Working Party, then discussed on 5 March at the Bureau of the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health of the European Commission. The final draft report and next steps of the European Commission will be then examined by the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health on 24 March.

The UEPG General Secretariat will keep you informed, and is ready to act, if further amendments would impact the sector.

UEPG News

10 years French Environment Charter

On 9 December, at the Chaillot Palace in Paris, the UNICEM Environment Charter celebrated its 10th anniversary. Following a first Aggregates Producers Charter and scientific studies, the quarrying industries Environment Charter was launched in 2004. After 10 years of commitment, good practices sharing and progress is illustrated in having 432 signatory companies, 1080 committed sites, representing 57% of all aggregates producing sites, and nearly 4,000 people trained as part of the annual sessions since 2005.

Why an Environment Charter?

Being aware of the potential impact of the aggregates extraction on the fauna, flora and the neighbourhood is a first step. More important is to take concrete action to reduce these impacts. The Aggregates Industry Environmental Charter specifically helps Signatories to adapt their operations in

respect of biodiversity and of all environmental aspects.

Working with Machinery Producers

On 17 December, Martin Isles, Health & Safety Committee Chair, Dirk Fincke, Secretary General and Miette Dechelle, Public Affairs Manager went to visit the office the Committee of European Construction Equipment (CECE) in Brussels to further collaborate with Machinery and Equipment suppliers at EU level. The UEPG Delegation discussed with Stephan Belaen, Technical Manager of CECE Safer by Design, the review of Occupational Health and Safety Directives, Drivers' training, safe and resource efficient machines and equipment, exhaust emissions and machines for producing recycled aggregates.

The meeting was very fruitful identifying areas of common interest. A second meeting is planned in January 2015 with the new CECE Secretary General, Sigrid de Vries to work together on concrete actions.

NePSi & Construction Trade Unions

On 17 December, Martin Isles, Health & Safety Committee Chair and Miette Dechelle, Public Affairs Manager were invited to participate at a meeting organised by the NePSi Secretariat to present NePSi and similar exchange of good practices in terms of controlling Respirable Crystalline Silica in the Construction sector in Europe to Employer and Employees' Representatives of the Construction sector.

The final aim was to raise awareness of the common challenges faced with the revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive in 2015, if Respirable Crystalline Silica was to be inserted as a substance within the reviewed Directive. Construction' sector Employers' and Employees' representatives will meet in March to inform NePSi on their members' views and feedback on the social dialogue agreement.

Hypotheses

A first positive step in a near future could be to receive the support of the Construction Sector to the NePSi Agreement, then to have an European network of exchange of good

practices in Europe within the Construction sector, and finally the Construction sector in long term to integrate the NePSi Agreement, which should be then adapted to the Construction sectors' environment's constraints.

What is NePSi?

NEPSi is the acronym for the resulting European Network for Silica formed by the Employee and Employer European sectoral association signatories of the Social Dialogue "Agreement on Workers' Health Protection Through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silicas and Products Containing it" since April 2006.

Explosives for civil use - Workshops in Portugal and France

In December, the Portuguese Aggregates Producers Association, ANIET and the French Aggregates Producers Association, UNPG have organised a serial of workshops in their respective countries with experts of the whole supply chain to inform and train on the 'Track and Trace' Explosives for civil uses' Directive with the support of the explosives for civil uses Task Force's materials which can be obtained at <http://www.explosives-for-civil-uses.eu/>.

Similar work has been already organised over 2014 in other UEPG Members' countries (e.g. in Spain, Germany) or is planned for beginning of 2015 (e.g. in Belgium). Would you wish to share your work and good practices as well as challenges faced for a timely implementation of the Directive, please do not hesitate to contact the UEPG General Secretariat at secretariat@uepg.eu.

UEPG Delegation in China



UEPG Past-President Jim O'Brien was invited to give a keynote address at the China

International Aggregates Conference on "The European Aggregates Industry, its Challenges and Opportunities" on 10 December in Shanghai. It transpired that the Chinese industry is now facing very similar challenges on environmental and safety performance, as well as in ensuring access to local resources.

UEPG and the China Aggregates Association, representing 40% of the global aggregates production, will continue to exchange information and good practice.

Happy New Year 2015!

The UEPG Team (namely UEPG President, Arnaud Colson, Secretary General, Dirk Fincke and Public Affairs Managers Sandrine Devos and Miette Dechelle) wishes a healthy, safe and prosperous New Year 2015! We would like to warmly thank all our Members for their much-valued support for UEPG activities in 2014.

Upcoming UEPG meetings

- 15 January** Environmental Product Declaration & Regulated Dangerous Substances Working Group, Brussels
- 3 February** Recycling Task Force, Brussels
- 3 February** Committee Chair Coordination, Brussels
- 4 February** Market Based Instruments WG, Brussels
- 12-13 March** UEPG Committee meetings, Stockholm, Sweden
- 15 April** UEPG Board Policy Dinner, Brussels
- 16 April** UEPG Board Meeting, Brussels
- 20-21 May** Delegates Assembly, Strasbourg, France
- 15 Sept.** UEPG Recycling Task Force meeting, Brussels
- 15-16 Oct.** UEPG Committee meetings, Brussels
- 18 Nov.** NEEIP Forum (tbc), Brussels
- 18 Nov.** UEPG Board Policy Dinner (tbc), Brussels
- 19 Nov.** UEPG Board Meeting (tbc), Brussels

We will also launch in March 2015 at UEPG Committee meetings, the 2016 UEPG Sustainable Development Awards. Get ready at national level! The 2016 SDA Terms of Reference will be circulated around that time.