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New Communication expected – UEPG refocuses its strategy

Innovation Union Partnership

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EU Live Issues

Raw Materials Initiative

The new Communication on the Raw Materials Initiative was expected to be published by the Commission on 26 January. Being postponed already from December last year, the Commission has been asked to further delay publication. Reason for this is the urgent request of an EU Member State to include commodity markets for oil, gas, electricity, agriculture and food security. This would reduce significantly the importance of the key issue of access to resources. UEPG reacted promptly by sending a letter to Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani urging him to refocus exclusively on the non-energy extractive industry.



Preparing the Parliamentary Debate on the Raw Materials Initiative

Anna Haas, Head of Office of Rapporteur Reinhard Bütikofer MEP and Christian Haeser (MIRO) in the European Parliament, Brussels.

On Monday 24 January, Christian Haeser from the German Aggregates Federation (MIRO) and Dirk Fincke from the UEPG General Secretariat briefed the offices of the Parliamentary Rapporteurs and Shadow Rapporteurs on the aggregates industry position. This was in preparation of the upcoming Communication and a Public Hearing on 26 January in the European Parliament. Chaired by Herbert Reul MEP (EPP, Germany) experts outlined their view on critical raw materials, access to resources within Europe, Recycling and Resource Efficiency.

UEPG is currently reviewing its strategy on access to resources with regard to the Raw Materials

Initiative which might now lack a focused approach. The new Communication might be published at beginning February if not further delayed.



Public Hearing on the Raw Materials Initiative

Chaired by Herbert Reul MEP (centre) Rapporteurs and experts exchanged views.

Next Steps

February

New Communication on the Raw Materials Initiative

13 April

European Minerals Forum Dinner Debate in European Parliament, Brussels

Innovation Union Partnership

In December 2011, the European Commission presented a potential partnership on “Raw Materials for a Modern Society”, which would be set up as a parallel track to the Raw Materials Initiative. The partnership would be part of the EU 2020 Strategy Flagship on Innovation Union and aims at re-focussing R&D and two areas of the partnership are of direct interest to Aggregates Producers:

Developing new innovative technologies and solutions for sustainable raw materials supply.

All aspects of the value chain, including efficient resource processing, should be addressed. 10 new pilot plants would demonstrate innovative approaches and recycling would be an important field.

Improving the regulatory framework via promotion of excellence and promoting recycling through public procurement and private initiatives.

In light of the growing focus on resource efficiency and recycling, UEPG will be represented by Brian

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James, Chair of the European Platform for Recycled Aggregates.

Next steps

28 Feb. Stakeholders' Workshop in Brussels

Greening the Aggregates Industry

DG Environment has published an article "[greening the aggregates industry](#)" describing the positive contribution to biodiversity under the programme of the Environmental Technology Action Plan (ETAP).

The text is generally positive and is based on the Leoben Review and the 2010 UEPG Sustainable Development Awards Brochure. UEPG's commitment to biodiversity and sustainable development and our involvement in driving forward Biodiversity in the aggregates industry, developing KPIs and our participation in the Commission Business and Biodiversity Platform is clearly now paying off.

"The vast majority of aggregates come from quarrying – the remainder is either recycled, manufactured or from the sea. This has major consequences for the industry's impact as the industry leaves a large stamp on the natural environment." However, some paras later it is said that "Quarrying can actively contribute to nature protection by creating new habitats for wildlife, such as wetlands, that can be important stepping stones between protected areas".

Minerals planning analyses "potential conflicts with other land uses, including protected areas, forests and groundwater protection zones". Planning recommends "areas that are suitable for extraction and discourages others."

It continues very positively: "Biodiversity is a top priority for the aggregate industry, according to the UEPG. In 2007, UEPG partnered with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. In 2009, it launched an online database of over 120 best-practice biodiversity case studies. In April 2010, it became the first industry association to join the Commission's Business and Biodiversity Platform. Biodiversity is therefore a top priority for the aggregate industry".

Good practice is mentioned: "On-site innovations include the installation of a water-treatment plant at the McGraths Cregaree Quarry in Ireland to ensure high quality discharged ground water. This helped it win the UEPG's environmental best-practice award in 2010 for outstanding innovation." The Commission has included a direct link to McGraths Cregaree Group highlighting good practice.

The article concludes that "demand for aggregates will reach four billion tones (...). As long as this is paired with a respect for environmental laws, both the built and natural environment will emerge as winners."

Parliamentary Employment Committee

On 25 and 26 January the European Parliament Employment and Social Affairs Committee invited European Agencies' Directors and the Hungarian Presidency Ministers to present their 2011 priorities and calendars.

Jukka Takala, Director of the European Agency for safety at work, based in Bilbao, with whom UEPG is working closely, presented 2011 issues as:

- The online interactive Risk Assessment tool
- Safe maintenance in practice Report and campaign
- Study "Implementation of the Directives on Health and Safety at Work as a Cost Factor"
- European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks with a special focus on micro and small enterprises

Next Steps

1 Feb.

EP EMPL Committee

SSDCEI 2011 Work Programme

The Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for extractive industry took place on 26 January at the European Commission in Brussels. The main issues were to agree between Employers and Employees Representatives of the different sectors on the 2011 Work Programme calendar. The proposal for the 2011 initiatives will be presented at the next plenary session in March for agreement. The key issues are:

- Prepare a 2012 EU campaign, funded by the European Commission, on safe machinery and safe behaviours using 'Safer by Design' as a role model.
- Common declaration on Health and Safety
- The next step for NePSi Agreement
- Raw Materials Initiative what's next? –
- Start European Analysis with data from Members on social and economic benefits of Quarries and Mines at local level.
- Invite 1 Employer Representative and 1 Employee Representative of the same country, to present their common work, issues and projects on Social Dialogue.

Next Step

2nd March

Plenary session & presentation of Safer by Design project

UEPG News

MPA Biodiversity Strategy

The UK Environment Minister, Richard Benyon MP, recognised MPA members' significant contribution to UK biodiversity in a House of Commons reception organised by the Mineral Products Association (MPA) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The event, which brought together MPs, industry leaders and conservationists, launched MPA's biodiversity strategy.

MPA's biodiversity strategy will provide a framework for the industry's contribution to the achievement of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Recent research by the RSPB indicated that mineral sites could meet 100% of the targets for nine out of 11 priority habitats in the UK BAP.



Nigel Jackson, Chief Executive MPA

"I believe this industry is uniquely placed, equipped, organized and motivated to help the UK achieve its BAP targets on habitat creation. .../ But we need good economic conditions to invest, reasonable and proportionate legislation and a planning system that is fit for purpose."

Dr. Mark Avery, Director of Conservation, RSPB, said "It's still a surprise to some members of the public when they hear that places where minerals have been dug out, big holes in the ground, can be fantastic places for nature afterwards - but there are lots and lots of really good examples and the number of examples is growing all the time."

UEPG Meetings

14 Feb. PR & Communication Task Force, Vienna, Austria

15 Feb. Biodiversity Task Force, Vienna, Austria

10-11 March Committee Meetings, Budapest, Hungary

13 April EMD Première and Dinner Debate, European Parliament, Brussels

14 April Board Meeting, Brussels

26 May Entrepreneurs' Forum, Lisbon, Portugal

27 May Delegates Assembly, Lisbon, Portugal