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CEEP Water Task Force: Updates and Call for input

Communication sent to members of the CEEP Water Task Force (17/1/2018):

I would like to inform you about the following issues and call for your input:

1. Draft CEEP Response to Pharmaceuticals Consultation

I would like to thank Vewin and Gelsenwasser who very kindly sent me their respective responses to the targeted stakeholder consultation of the European Commission on pharmaceuticals in the environment. Thanks to their input, we have drafted a CEEP response to the consultation, despite the short time left until the Commission's deadline (this Sunday).

Based on these two contributions, you can find hereafter the [draft CEEP response](#). Please feel warmly invited to inform me if you can approve this draft **by this Friday, 19 January, at 3.00pm at the latest**. Thank you in advance.

In addition to that, I would like to inform you that a CEEP delegation participated in last Friday's Commission workshop on pharmaceuticals in the environment. Organised by the Directorate-General for the Environment, it was supposed to allow an informal discussion with associations and companies from the European water sector. CEEP participants underlined the urgent need for action and welcomed the fact that the Commission's Strategic Approach on this issue is expected for the end of May 2018. They also highlighted the need for a full life cycle

approach, with a focus on the polluter-pays-principle. The Strategic Approach might include a number of ideas that could help addressing the problem at European, national and local level. However, the Commission officials present at the meeting underlined that the Strategic Approach will not announce new legislative measures, due to a lacking Impact Assessment. Any legislative changes would be up to the "next Commission" in 2019.

For your information, please find here a [presentation by Helen Clayton](#), Policy officer in DG ENV, about recent meetings and possible options the Commission is currently assessing.

2. Next CEEP Water Task Force meeting on 14 February 2018

As you might already have noted, the next CEEP Water Task Force meeting will take place on 14 February 2018, from 2 to 5 pm, at CEEP premises in Brussels. In the morning of that same day, the CEEP Environment Task Force will take place. More information, including the draft agendas, will be sent around at the end of January.

3. Upcoming meeting of Commission DWD Expert Group

On behalf of Wennemar Cramer, CEEP Expert in the Commission Expert Group for the Drinking Water Directive (DWD), I would like to forward you hereafter the [draft agenda](#) of the next meeting Expert Group meeting on 23 February 2018. At the CEEP Water Task Force meeting one week earlier, we will be able to discuss together the CEEP input that Wennemar Cramer will bring in during the Expert Group meeting.

Please note that agenda item 13 is a direct follow-up to our CEEP letter to DG Environment regarding the Technical Guidance for Deriving Environmental Quality Standards that was decided at the last Task Force meeting.

4. Draft EEA 2018 State of Water report

On behalf of Christiane Barth, CEEP representative in the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) of the CIS-process, I would like to forward you hereafter the [draft 2018 State of Water report of the European Environment Agency](#). It has been sent to Member States in order to collect their comments.

The report aims to present results on the following questions: What is the status of EU waters based on the second River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs)? Which pressures are causing less than good status? What progress has been achieved during the first RBMP cycle (2009-2015)? In response to these questions, the report presents results on the status of surface waters and groundwater in Europe, providing overviews at EU level, Member State and River Basin Districts.

5. Overview of other documents of interest

In addition to that, the following three documents might also be of interest to you:

– Final version of the Commission Joint Research Centre's (JRC) [report on the minimum quality requirement for water reuse for agricultural irrigation and aquifer recharge](#)

(For your information, a revised impact assessment for a potential legal instrument on water reuse has been submitted to the Commission's internal Regulatory Scrutiny Board in December last year. A possible legislative proposal is not expected before the end of March)

– [Study on the precautionary principle in EU environmental policies](#)

– [The final version of CIS Guidance Document on WFD Article 4\(7\)](#) (and hereafter the link to [all published CIS Guidance Documents](#))

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Call for input on State Aid rules & Commission VAT proposals

Communication sent to members of the CEEP Public Services Board (19/1/2018):

I would like to inform you about the following points and call for your input:

1. Call for input on experience with State Aid rules

On 7 February 2018, the Permanent Study Group on SGIs of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) will discuss a position paper on State Aid rules and, more specifically, the Services of General Economic Interest Package. A representative of the European Commission's DG Competition might also join this discussion.

This is a great opportunity to showcase the experience of SGEI providers with the existing State Aid rules. One important issue that has often been discussed in CEEP is the need for a better involvement of the local and regional level, both authorities and SGEI providers. Indeed, CEEP members have made the experience that the current rules create unnecessary obstacles and/or a lack of legal certainty, amongst others as the dialogue between the Member States and the Commission on State aid cases is undertaken by central government, while other administrative levels do not enjoy direct access to this process.

However, when discussing with the European Commission, we are always asked to provide concrete examples for the crucial points regarding SGEIs at local and regional level. Therefore, we would like to invite you to report us your concrete experiences. This would allow to build up a small compendium of examples and try to further influence the debate in the interest of SGEI providers at local and regional level. The compendium could then be used in several lobby occasions, the EESC upcoming meeting being the first one.

It would be much appreciated if you could **send me** (Johannes.imminger@ceep.eu) your examples **by 31 January 2018** at the latest. Thank you very much in advance.

2. Publication of new Commission proposals on VAT

The European Commission presented yesterday its [latest proposals](#) to complete the overhaul of the VAT rules at European level.

First, the Commission proposed [amendments to the Directive on Value Added Tax \(VAT\) rates](#) (please find hereafter the [Annex](#)).

Member States can currently apply a reduced rate of as low as 5% to two distinct categories of products in their country. A number of Member States also apply specific derogations for further reduced rates.

In addition to a standard VAT rate of minimum 15%, Member States would now be able to put in place:

- two separate reduced rates of between 5% and the standard rate chosen by the Member State;
- one exemption from VAT (or 'zero rate');
- one reduced rate set at between 0% and the reduced rates.

The current, complex list of goods and services to which reduced rates can be applied would be abolished and replaced by a new list of products (such as weapons, alcoholic beverages, gambling and tobacco) to which the standard rate of 15% or above would **always** be applied.

To safeguard public revenues, Member States will also have to ensure that the weighted average VAT rate is at least 12%.

The new regime also means that all goods currently enjoying rates different from the standard rate can continue to do so.

Second, the Commission also proposed new ideas to [reduce VAT costs for SMEs](#).

Under current rules, Member States can exempt sales of small companies from VAT provided they do not exceed a given annual turnover, which varies from one country to another. Growing SMEs lose their access to simplification measures once the exemption threshold has been exceeded. Also, these exemptions are available only to domestic players. This means that there is no level playing field for small companies trading within the EU.

While the current exemption thresholds would remain, today's proposals would introduce:

- A €2 million revenue threshold across the EU, under which small businesses would benefit from simplification measures, whether or not they have already been exempted from VAT;
- The possibility for Member States to free all small businesses that qualify for a VAT exemption from obligations relating to identification, invoicing, accounting or returns;
- A turnover threshold of €100,000 which would allow companies operating in more than one Member State to benefit from the VAT exemption.

This issue is yet another example of the facilities available for SMEs, and reinforce the need for CEEP to mobilise during the upcoming consultation on the EU SME Definition.

More information on this consultation will be circulated in the coming weeks, as soon as it will be published by the European Commission.

The Internal Market Task Force will go into the details of the proposals for a VAT reform, according to the CEEP Work Programme for 2018. Should you wish to get involved in this activity, please do not hesitate to contact me.

3. Urban Agenda Partnership on Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement

As you might have noted, e.g. at the last PSB meeting or in last December's CEEP Newsletter, CEEP has joined the Urban Agenda Partnership on Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement. Nadine Fischer, General Rapporteur of the CEEP SGI Task Force, very kindly represents CEEP there.

In this context, I would like to inform you about two points that might be interesting for you:

– A [questionnaire on procurement strategies](#), to the attention of local and regional authorities (to be filled out by 29 January 2018)

With this questionnaire, members of the Partnership are aiming at sampling different categories of a procurement strategy. Different definitions may be presented, which could be used afterwards for a projected guideline. Probably, the results will indicate that there are different types of procurement strategies. If so, then the guideline will be able to present these different (basic) categories and thus enable cities to make a choice which suits them best.

– A [list of events on innovative and responsible public procurement](#) as well as a highlighted invitation to a Brussels-based [event on innovative procurement](#) on 13 February 2018.

More background information:

Established with the 'Pact of Amsterdam' of May 2016, the Urban Agenda for the EU is a new working method to ensure maximum utilisation of the growth potential of cities and to successfully tackle social challenges. It aims to promote cooperation between Member States, Urban Authorities, the European Commission and other stakeholders, in order to stimulate growth, liveability and innovation in the cities of Europe.

As stated in the Pact of Amsterdam, Thematic Partnerships are the key delivery vehicle towards realising the goals of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The Pact of Amsterdam lists 12 Priority Themes for the Urban Agenda for the EU. On each Theme, a Partnership has been formed. In order to realise the full potential of the European Union and deliver on its strategic objectives, the Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve Urban Authorities in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge.

One of the Partnerships is the Partnership on “Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement” and is composed by the following members:

- Urban Authorities Haarlem (Coordinator), Preston, Gabrovo, Larvik, Nantes, Vantaa, Turin and Munich;
- Member State: Italy (Digital Italy);
- Observers and Associations: CEEP, CEMR, EUROCITIES, URBACT and ICLEI;
- European Commission: DG REGIO and DG GROW.

Members of the Partnership have divided their work among three working groups. The above-mentioned survey is carried out by Working group 1, focusing on public management and governance. Nadine Fischer is representing CEEP also in this working group.

Should you have any questions or wish to contribute to CEEP’s input to the Partnership, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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European Parliament decision on Clean Energy Package & Invitation to event on DSOs

Communication sent to members of the CEEP Energy Task Force (19/1/2018):

I would like to inform you about the following issues that might be of interest to you:

1. Next CEEP Energy Task Force meeting on 9 February 2018

As already written just before the Christmas break, Ms Petya Icheva, First Secretary in charge of energy policies at the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the EU, will participate in the first CEEP Energy Task Force meeting in 2018 that will take place on Friday, 9 February 2018, from 10.15 am to 1.15 pm, at CEEP premises in Brussels. We look forward to your participation to a very interesting debate on the Council’s position on the Clean Energy Package. Meeting documents will be sent to you next week.

2. European Parliament votes on key files of Clean Energy Package

On 17 January, the European Parliament voted on three key elements of the Commission’s Clean Energy Package:

Amongst others, the European Parliament adopted its position on the **Regulation for the Governance of the Energy Union**, with 466 in favour and 139 against, while 38 abstained. The Governance Regulation is a key part of the Clean Energy Package, setting out a harmonized way for countries to set up their national energy and climate plans for the next decade. The proposed law also streamlines national reporting requirements for progress on renewables and energy efficiency targets, and establishes mechanisms to make sure countries don’t fall behind. The report calls on countries to submit their national plans every five years covering 10-year rolling periods and getting stronger each time. It also wants countries to deploy renewable energy in a “progressive trajectory” over the next decade. If countries fall behind in meeting their 2030 targets, they must come up with additional measures within one year to make up for the gap, according to the Parliament’s position. It also states the EU should become a net-zero carbon economy by 2050, which would require countries to develop long-term energy and climate strategies not just for 2030 but for mid-century. The report also suggests introducing the concept of a “carbon budget” into EU law, to identify how much CO₂ can still be emitted without breaching the 1.5-2 degrees global warming scenarios in the Paris climate agreement.

The European Parliament also voted on its position on the **Energy Efficiency Directive review**. It decided to boost the EU’s energy efficiency target to a minimum of 35 percent by 2030, and make it binding at EU level. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) adopted their position on the Energy Efficiency Directive in a vote of

485 in favor, 132 against and 58 abstentions. The target is a step back from the even more ambitious position adopted by the Parliament's ITRE committee in November. The committee wanted a 40 percent target and to make it binding at the national level, something that the plenary vote of 17 January does not do. Besides increasing the headline target, MEPs also voted to strengthen a sub-target, known as Article 7, which calls on utilities to make yearly energy savings equivalent to 1.5 percent of annual sales to consumers. Even with the compromise, Parliament's position is more ambitious than that of the Council, which agreed in June to boost the energy efficiency target from 27 to 30 percent but did not clarify whether the target should be binding or indicative. It also watered down the sub-target.

MEPs also voted on the **Renewable Energy Directive review**, deciding to increase the EU's renewable energy target to 35 percent for 2030. The measure, another key file in the Commission's Clean Energy Package, passed with 492 votes in favor, 88 against and 107 abstentions. The 35 percent target would only be binding for the whole of the EU, but not at the national level. The EU's current goal for 2030 is 27 percent. The new target would also allow countries to fall short of meeting their national pledges by a maximum of 10 percent if they struggle "due to exceptional and duly justified circumstances." This flexibility was introduced as part of a deal last year between the European People's Party, the Socialists and Democrats and the liberal ALDE group in order to secure wide political support. However, the report, led by Spanish S&D MEP José Blanco López, also includes mechanisms to ensure countries don't lag. The Parliament's position is more ambitious than that of the Council, which did not touch the 27 percent target when it adopted its position on the directive in December. As part of their vote, MEPs also agreed to maintain a renewable energy target for the transport sector and boost it to 12 percent from 10 percent, while capping the share of conventional food-based biofuels and phasing out palm oil, used to make biodiesel, by 2021.

In general, on all three files, the European Parliament chose a more ambitious approach than the Council. Three-way trilogue talks between the two institutions as well as the Commission are expected to start soon.

The CEEP Energy Task Force meeting on 9 February will allow to discuss these votes and to work on an updated CEEP position in view of the trilogue negotiations.

3. Invitation to Parliament lunch debate on role of DSOs within the new electricity market design

On behalf of Elisa Schenner, I would like to forward you Wiener Stadtwerke's kind invitation to an event on the role of Distribution System Operators within the new electricity market design that they are organising in the European Parliament together with Martina Werner, MEP. The lunch debate will take place on 31 January 2018 at the European Parliament in Brussels. Please note that the event will be held in German language only.

You can find [here](#) more information, including on the registration (by 23 January 2018), as well as below this message.

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Commission guest at next CEEP Environment Task Force meeting & Commission 2018 Circular Economy Package

Communication sent to members of the CEEP Environment Task Force (16/1/2018):

I would like to inform you about the following issues that might interest you:

1. Commission guest at next CEEP Environment Task Force meeting on 14 February 2018

As already communicated, the next CEEP Environment Task Force meeting will take place on 14 February, from 10am to 1pm. I am now delighted to inform you that Giuseppina Luvarà from the Commission's DG Environment will take part in our meeting. She works on the current review of the EU's chemicals legislation within the Unit B2 'Sustainable Chemicals'. The exchange of views with Ms Luvarà will be a great opportunity to discuss the role the sectors in which CEEP members are active, play within the Commission's ongoing evaluation of the EU legislative framework for chemicals.

Please already save the meeting date. For your information, the CEEP Water Task Force will take place on the same day, from 2 to 5pm. Meeting documents will be sent around by the end of January.

2. Publication of 2018 Commission Circular Economy Package, including EU Plastics Strategy

Today, the European Commission published several new initiatives related to the implementation of its Circular Economy Strategy. The Package includes the following elements:

- [The European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy](#)
- [Three annexes to the Plastics Strategy](#), including a list of future EU measures to implement the Strategy, a list of measures recommended to national authorities and industry, as well as a Pledging Campaign
- [A Communication on the implementation of the circular economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation](#)
- [A Communication on a monitoring framework for the circular economy](#)
- [A proposal for a Directive on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships](#)
- [A report on the impact of the use of oxo-degradable plastic, including oxo-degradable plastic carrier bags, on the environment](#)
- [A report on critical raw materials and the circular economy](#)

The Plastics Strategy aims at protecting the environment from plastic pollution whilst fostering growth and innovation, thus trying to show the strong business case for transforming the way products are designed, produced, used, and recycled in the EU and by taking the lead in this transition. Under this Commission initiative, all plastic packaging on the EU market should become recyclable by 2030. The consumption of single-use plastics should be reduced and the intentional use of microplastics be restricted.

With the Plastics Strategy, the Commission has also adopted a Monitoring Framework, composed of a set of ten key indicators which cover each phase of the cycle, which will measure progress towards the transition to a circular economy at EU and national level.

Regarding the next institutional steps, the Commission's legislative proposal for a new Directive on port reception facilities will now go to the European Parliament and Council for adoption. Subject to Better Regulation requirements, the Commission will present the proposal on single-use plastics later in 2018. The Commission will also launch the work on the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and prepare guidelines on separate collection and sorting of waste to be issued in 2019.

The Commission 2018 Circular Economy Package and its implication for public services providers will also be high on the agenda of the next CEEP Environment Task Force meeting on 14 February 2018. In order to best prepare the meeting, please feel warmly invited to send me any analyses and/or statements that you might want to contribute in view of the Task Force's work on the CEEP contribution to the debate on the Package and its different elements.

3. Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference

To discuss the measures included in the 2018 Circular Economy Package, explore new areas of action, and share the first achievements of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, the Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee will host the 2018 edition of the Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference on 20-21 February in Brussels.

You can find more information and register to the Conference [here](#). Please note that registration will close once the full capacity of the venue is reached and in any case no later than this Thursday, 18 January 2018, at 5:00 pm.

Should you wish to take part on behalf of CEEP, please contact me by this Thursday morning, 18 January, at 10am at the latest.

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Commission Deputy Head of Unit at next CEEP Water Task Force meeting on 14 February 2018

Communication sent to members of the CEEP Water Task Force (23/1/2018):

I am delighted to inform you that **Hans Stielstra, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission's "Clean Water" Unit C1 in DG Environment, will participate in our next CEEP Water Task Force meeting on 14 February 2018.** He will join our meeting at 3.30 pm (the overall Task Force meeting will start at 2.00 pm and will finish at 5.00 pm).

We look forward to welcoming you all for this highly interesting exchange of views. Indeed, Mr Stielstra's Unit is currently working on several key files amongst the European water policies: The upcoming strategic approach on pharmaceuticals in the environment (he also chaired the stakeholder meeting on this issue two weeks ago), the possible legislative proposal on water reuse as well as the preparation of the reviews of both the Water Framework Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive.

Please save the date already now. Meeting documents, including the draft agenda, will be sent to you next week. Besides the exchange of views with Mr Stielstra, a second focus will be put on the upcoming Commission proposal for the review of the Drinking Water Directive, expected for next week Wednesday.

For your information, the next CEEP Environment Task Force meeting will take place in the morning of the same day, 14 February 2018, from 10am to 1pm. We are delighted to welcome Giuseppina Luvarà from the Commission's DG Environment who works on the current review of the EU's chemicals legislation within the Unit B2 'Sustainable Chemicals'.

Should you have any questions or remarks, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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CEEP Transport Task Force: Meeting dates for 2018

Communication sent to members of the CEEP Transport Task Force (19/1/2018):

On behalf of Monika Unterholzner, Chair of the CEEP Transport Task Force, I would like to inform you about the Task Force's meeting dates in 2018.

The first meeting will take place on Tuesday, 20 March 2018. We will inform you shortly if it will take place in the morning or afternoon of that day. This still depends on a possible guest from the European institutions. As usual, should you wish to bring forward proposals for possible guests and/or meeting issues, please feel warmly invited to contact me as soon as possible.

The second meeting will take place on either 19 (Tuesday) or 21 (Thursday) June 2018. In order to allow the participation of all Task Force members, please inform me by the end of next week, by Friday, 26 January 2018, at the latest, if one of these two dates is not possible for you. Afterwards, we will fix the final meeting date for June.

At the moment, **the third meeting is tentatively scheduled for either 9 (Tuesday), 11 (Thursday) or 16 (Tuesday) October 2018.** Please save these dates already now and keep me informed, should one of these not be possible for you. We will fix it at a later stage, ideally in the course of the second quarter of 2018 (again dependent on a possible guest from the European institutions as it was wished by the participants of the last Task Force meetings).

As you might already have seen in the overall [CEEP Work Programme for 2018](#), the following issues were fixed for the **Transport Task Force's Work Programme for 2018**:

– Commission Mobility Packages and their legislative follow-up in the European Parliament and Council, in particular:

- Eurovignette Directive
- Clean Vehicles Directive
- Passenger Coach Services Directive

– Passenger rights

– Public services providers and future mobility solution, including e-mobility and urban mobility

– Contribution to the Sustainability Board's activities on the digitalisation of public services, in particular regarding the (open) data policy initiatives of the Commission, especially in relation to the Public Sector Information Directive (PSI) and the Intelligent Transport Directive (ITS)

As always, please feel warmly invited to contact me, should you have any questions or would like to contribute to the work on a specific issue.

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CEEP Newsflash – 12 & 19 January 2018

Latest copies attached:

[CEEP Newsflash – 12 January 2018](#)

[CEEP Newsflash – 19 January 2018](#)

Published by Brenda Conlon on January 25th, 2018

Social Europe e-newsletters : 19 & 26 January 2018

Latest Social Europe e-newsletters attached:

[Social Europe News – 16 January 2018](#)

[Social Europe News – 23 January 2018](#)

Eversheds Sutherland : E-briefings, Updates and Conferences

See below links to information received from our partners **Eversheds Sutherland**:

[Current developments flyer](#)

[Driving for Work Briefings with police. 2018](#)

[Employees and Mental Health Briefings 2018](#)

[Immigration-courses-2017-18](#)

[International Pensions promises 2018 course](#)

[Minimum-wages](#)

[Rising-ET-claims-Acas](#)