



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Reporting Requirements under Section 2(5) of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002

Summary Report from the Minister for Housing, Local Government
and Heritage for the six-month period from January to June 2024

Introduction

This report is laid out in two parts:

- Part 1 sets out the principal developments during the Belgian Presidency, January – June 2024, in those policy areas at EU level which fall within the areas of responsibility of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Part 2 provides an update on the EU legislative proposals for which information notes were submitted to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act, 2002, in the period January – June 2024.

Part 1

The Belgian Presidency of the EU – January to June 2024

Belgium held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from January to June 2024, under the motto “Protect, Strengthen, Prepare”.

The six main programme priorities identified by the Belgian Presidency were:

- Defending rule of law, democracy and unity;
- Strengthening our competitiveness;
- Pursuing a green and just transition;
- Reinforcing our social and health agenda;
- Protecting people and borders;
- Promoting a global Europe.

Policy developments relevant to this Department

The following specific policy developments during the period January to June 2024 were of significance to this Department

COM (2022) 304 - Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Nature Restoration

The Nature Restoration Regulation was adopted by the European Parliament on the 27 February 2024, ratified by the Council of the EU on 17 June 2024 and signed into law on the 24 June 2024.

The Regulation aims to put measures in place to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050 and it is a crucial component of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

The Regulation sets out a framework for Member States to restore nature, with binding targets for a wide range of ecosystems including rivers, forests, oceans, urban areas and agricultural ecosystems, as well as protected habitats and species throughout the State.

To implement the regulation, Member States are required to develop nature restoration plans, to be assessed by the Commission. The proposed nature restoration law also entails a specific objective to reverse the decline of pollinator populations by 2030.

COM (2022) 541 — Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning urban wastewater treatment (recast)

The recast Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) aims to address, among other areas, the following:

- Pollution of emerging concern and new societal challenges;
- Use of extended producer responsibility for the Pharmaceutical and Cosmetic sector to pay for a 4th level of treatment;
- Improve the governance of the sector;
- Better tackle remaining pollution, from urban sources such as storm water overflows and urban runoff, small villages and towns not falling within the scope of the Directive, and individual collection systems.

The EU Commission published a proposed recast UWWTD in October 2022.

The Spanish Presidency published a revised text proposal on 29 September 2023 which was discussed at Coreper on 4 October 2023. The EU Parliament text has passed their ENVI Committee vote and the Plenary vote on 5 October 2023. The UWWTD passed with an overwhelming majority at Environment Council on 16 October 2023 after some minor additions to recitals in the text.

Under the Belgian Presidency, an outline agreement was reached on 29 January 2024 and technical trilogues are due to conclude shortly. The final compromised text was agreed at Coreper in March 2024. Due to the European Parliament elections, the final corrigendum vote is expected in Sept/Oct 2024 after the translations have been completed.

COM (2022) 144 - Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products, amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and repealing Regulation (EU) 305/2011)

On 30 March 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products, amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and repealing Regulation (EU) 305/2011 (the “Construction Products Regulation”).

The Proposal is based on Articles 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It lays down EU harmonised rules for the making available on the market of construction products, fulfilling the objectives of the Green Deal, and enhances the competitiveness of European industry through the setting of clear rules and improving enforcement and market surveillance.

At its meeting on 30 June 2023, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper I) endorsed the compromise text which had been prepared by the European Council Working Party on Technical Harmonisation (Construction Products). At this meeting, the Council Presidency concluded there was support for a Coreper mandate and that the Spanish Presidency should proceed to trilogue.

On 10 April 2024, the European Parliament approved the compromise text of the Construction Products Regulation.

The Regulation is current being finalised by the lawyer linguists and is expected to be published before the end of the year.

COM (2022) 540 — Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, Directive 2006/118/EC on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration and Directive 2008/105/EC on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy

The objective of the proposed Directive is to protect human health and the environment from the combined effects of toxic and/or persistent pollutants. Lists of pollutants and relevant quality standards, which are required to be reviewed regularly, are included in the legislation.

The Belgian Presidency convened a series of meetings to negotiate the text proposal throughout the beginning of 2024. The final compromise text was agreed at Coreper on 14 June 2024. The European Parliament adopted its position on 12 September 2023 and their position was confirmed by the plenary on 24 April 2024. The European Parliament amendments were discussed at a Working Party Environment meeting on 3 September and Council is currently preparing for Trilogues.

COM (2021) 802 – Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EU/2024/1275)

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) is the European Union's main legislative instrument aiming to promote the improvement of the energy performance of buildings within the European Union. A recast EPBD has been adopted by the European Parliament and Council and was published in May 2024. The new measures aim to increase the rate of renovation, particularly for the worst-performing buildings in each Member State. It will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy poverty in the EU.

This recast Directive is much broader in scope than previous directives which focused on new buildings or those undergoing renovations. The main focus of this Directive is the renovation of the entire building stock and the energy performance of existing buildings. In addition to technical requirements it covers financial incentives, financial/lending products, one stop shops, mandatory energy performance requirements for existing and public buildings and sustainable mobility among others.

Key requirements in the Directive include:

- Phasing out of fossil fuel boilers by 2040;
- Establishment of a national trajectory for the progressive renovation of residential building stock;
- Introduction of Minimum Energy Performance standards for the non-residential building sector;
- From 2030, all new buildings to be Zero Emissions buildings (ZEB) where the very low amount of energy required is fully sourced from renewables;
- Introduction of additional requirements for electric vehicle recharging infrastructure;
- Calculation of the life-cycle global warming potential of buildings; and
- Deployment of suitable solar energy installations.

Part 2

Summary of draft EU legislative proposals submitted by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for review by the Oireachtas

There were no draft EU legislative proposals for which information notes were submitted to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act, 2002, in the period January – June 2024.

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