



**DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE  
WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Friday 11 March 2022, 9:00 – 11:00**

**1) Opening by the Chair**

The chair, Ms. Anna Pasková, condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a moment of silence was held.

Ms. Pasková outlined a number of key elements to be considered in the context of this crisis:

- Greater need still to decarbonise and reduce EU dependence on oil and gas imports from Russia (i.e. greater focus on the security component already embedded already previously in the Green Deal);
- Solidarity as regards equity challenges and energy prices (a ‘just transition’ also means a solidary transition);
- Misinformation is a challenge;
- Protection of land and nature as these are strategic resources (agriculture, environment, sustainable and circular economy);
- EU values include strong societies and transparent and participatory approach.

The chair informed of the following next steps:

- Based on the draft recommendations, the proposals will be drafted by the Secretariat (based on three inputs – i.e. European citizens panels’ and national panels’ recommendations; exchange of ideas on the Digital Platform and plenary debates and working groups debates);
- The proposals will be translated into all languages and will be sent to the group next week;
- The group members should then send written comments before the 6<sup>th</sup> working group meeting;
- Interim outcomes of the working group discussions will be presented at the next Conference Plenary session on 25-26 March;
- The chair invited the participants to coordinate positions within the respective components and identify consensual proposals.

Mr. Hell, spokesperson for the European Citizens Panel (ECP) stressed that the events in Ukraine are drawing all the attention, but that the protection of the planet still requires urgent action and that therefore, the group should pursue the recommendations and targets in the field of climate and environment with the same vigor as done so far.

**2) Discussion**

The discussions were structured along the following areas:

- (i) climate change, energy and transport;
- (ii) agriculture, food production, biodiversity, ecosystems, pollution;



- (iii) sustainable consumption, packaging and production;
- (iv) information, awareness and dialogue.

### **Main points raised per topic:**

#### **1. Climate change, energy and transport**

- Ensuring the security of supply and reducing EU energy dependence have become even more important in the current; context (greater focus on renewables and energy savings; investments in infrastructure for renewables and transitional energy sources; increase support for research and innovation; need to adapt and accelerate planning laws and procedures, need to create an EU Energy Union; support for sustainable mobility and modernization of public transport; need to consider the geopolitical implications of all third country energy suppliers, where several have human rights and ecological issues);
- Maintain the commitment to the ambitious global climate objectives (2030 and 2050 climate neutrality objectives) and to the broader European Green Deal objectives and speed up the green transition, even though this needs to accommodate (and be balanced against) necessary measures in the short term to avoid shortages and ensure the well-being of the society;
- Some participants advocate a review of the applicable timelines for transition or greater and cleaner use of transitional energy sources, if needed using mitigating technologies such as CO2 filters and carbon storages, new LNG terminals, green hydrogen or extracting own resources within the EU, while other participants state that the crisis cannot lead to a return to the past; it was also pointed out that natural gas is important for fertilizers production.
- Strong sense of urgency in taking all necessary and possible measures and awareness that funding needs for infrastructure investments and compensation will hugely increase;
- Differences in the national circumstances and energy mix should be considered; other national conditions should also be taken into account (e.g. starting points, geographic position, need to connect remote regions, purchasing power...);
- The new European Commission Communication on energy ('REPowerEU') should be taken into account;
- Issues of affordability, especially of renewables, are now higher on the agenda as well as broader social aspects (support citizen and workers; fairer taxation systems to finance just transition; pre-financing the funds of EGD and for energy poverty);
- The Ukraine war shows the risks of abandoning alternative or transitional sources of energy production, e.g. use of nuclear energy should be rethink, as well as it shows us possible risks when the nuclear plant become a target.

#### **2. Agriculture, food production, biodiversity, ecosystems, pollution**

- Need to take measures against excessive intensive farming and production (with high costs in terms of land, climate, and environment), and establish clear definitions of the terms; apply circular economy principles in agriculture;



- Stronger support to organic and sustainable farming practices (foster domestic production with the proper price), although it is being noted that already today bio-farmers receive more support than conventional farmers;
- Support research to develop pesticides that are more sustainable, less polluting and less damaging to the environment;
- Many of the issues in energy also apply to agriculture, the Ukraine war will result in supply shock to world markets. Self-sufficiency and security of supply at affordable prices in food, animal feed, energy and fertilizers are interwoven and should be key goal in this sector (e.g. to address the impact of war on production and prices; to reduce high EU dependence on the rest of the world; vertical agriculture and urban gardening);
- CAP reform to support sustainability but also security of supply; avoid shortages); also, need to accommodate both short-term mitigating measures and long-term sustainability goals, e.g. when discussing set-asides.
- Cultural aspects as overconsumption, globalization and loss of relationship to food were mentioned.
- Need to strengthen research and innovation
- Focus on a combination of sustainability and productivity; avoid externalization of production to less sustainable international competitors.
- Recommendation on reforestation should be more prominent (legislation obliging companies to reforest areas);
- Training of farmers towards more sustainable agriculture; generate green jobs;
- Address social aspects: social dumping and transition to better jobs to have a more sustainable sector, avoid high prices;
- Measures for more information and education in schools, large-scale information campaigns on healthy food and production;
- More stringent measures to protect bees.

### **3. Sustainable consumption, production**

- A lot is already being done at the European level, but results can be improved much further.
- Strengthening the EU situation across the board by improving production/consumption patterns and services focused on repairing; behaviour measures, improving infrastructure;
- Proper functioning of the circular economy (rather repair and reuse than recycle; more durable products);
- Implementing the new Circular Economy Action Plan (right to repair, longer available and compatible spare parts, warranties);
- Measures on eco-design (design products in ways that are easier to repair);
- Consumers request more information, possibility to introduce unified labelling or an eco-score or digital product pass on the life span, repair possibility etc. of products. European enterprises must however have a level playing field with imported products, and high standards must not result in protectionism;
- Bring back secondary raw materials into market and production lifecycles from recycling;
- Social conditionality (all EU and MS should fund efforts and campaigns to promote sustainable consumption, e. g. in public procurements; include requirements for the respect of working conditions; also in other areas such as public procurement and trade policy).



#### **4. Information, awareness and dialogue**

- Increase availability, transparency and reliability of information (EU to set-up special information website on studies to raise awareness);
- Education is a central tool for the implementation of all recommendations (so that citizens can make informed decisions);
- Include environmental aspects in education (with focus on children, e.g. in school curricula);
- Fair competition between products produced in EU and those imported from outside the EU.

#### **3) Conclusions by the Chair**

The Chair thanked the participants for their contributions and mentioned that the next meeting will take place during the March II Conference Plenary on 25 March 2022.