



The lighting of the pendulum setting the countdown to the Copenhagen Climate Conference in Czech Republic

Czech Republic's Communication Priorities for 2009

On the first of January 2009, the Czech Republic assumed presidency of the European Union and will represent all 27 Member States at the international level until June 2009. For this relatively new Member State, environmental issues are high up on the agenda, despite the crisis that is shaking the world's financial markets. The Czech Republic joined the EU only 5 years ago and has already succeeded in reducing green-house gas emissions by 8% – a target originally set for 2012. The country has outlined different priorities for its presidency, of which fostering communication on climate change is the most important one. Other priorities include the protection of human health and the environment, sustainable consumption and production, as well as biodiversity.

The communication strategy focuses on European and international media, EU Member States, international organisations such as UNEP, and on NGOs. In this context, the Czech Ministry of Environment has organised communication forums (seminars, workshops, exhibitions), and published communication tools (brochures, posters and leaflets). Press conferences before every main event during the Czech Presidency are also being planned.

The presidency was launched in January by the Czech Minister for the Environment, Martin Bursík, who led an informal workshop on climate change and informed EU representatives on the programme for the presidency. He also travelled to Brussels to present his plan to the European Parliament and met with important environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace.

In anticipation of the Copenhagen climate change negotiations, a great responsibility falls upon the Czech Presidency as it is expected to coordinate the completion of EU preparations. This will require agreement on a new international document that outlines further reduction of greenhouse gas emissions after the Kyoto protocol expires in 2012.



President of the EU Environment Council Martin Bursík on the programme and priorities of the Czech Presidency



Biodiversity – an important topic during Czech Presidency

The Czech Presidency has already held a first climate meeting with the US's new Obama Administration, as well as with India. Furthermore, contacts with governments from Japan, Indonesia, and small island states were also established. In mid-February, the Czech Presidency led the EU-Africa climate talks in Nairobi during the 25th session of the UNEP Governing Council.

According to the Czech Environment Ministry spokesperson, Jakub Kašpar, one of the most interesting scheduled events is the European conference "Towards eEnvironment", which will be held in Prague in March. The conference is a meeting place for experts and interested people in the field of environmental information. It aims to foster the standardisation and integration of environmental data and information flows in Europe and beyond. These are essential pre-requirements for managing natural resources within the framework of sustainable development. The conference will display the state-of-the-art in environmental informatics. The main topics will include the development of a Single Information Space in Europe for the Environment (SISE) and best practices of European Member States in the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS).

The Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas in Europe, which will take place in Prague between 27 and 28 May is another highlight. Organised by the Czech Presidency together with the European Commission, it will provide the opportunity to develop a coordinated strategy for the protection and restoration of wild and nearly wild areas across Europe. In the EU communication "Halting Biodiversity Loss by 2010 and beyond", the EU states its commitment to halting biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010 and to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss in other parts of the world by the same date.

For more information on the Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas in Europe, please consult:
www.wildeurope.org

For more information on the conference "Towards eEnvironment", please consult:
www.e-envi2009.org

For the full events calendar, please consult:
www.mzp.cz/en

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Informal workshop on Climate Change in Prague in January