

## **Joint Meeting between the Energy and Managing Authorities Network (EMA) and the European Network of Environmental Authorities – Managing Authorities**

1 December 2020, 14.00 – 17.00

### **Virtual WebEx meeting**

The first joint meeting of the European Network of Environmental and Managing Authorities (ENEA-MA) and the Energy and Managing Authorities Network (EMA) was framed in the context of the European Green Deal, which calls for more ambition with a view of the transition to a climate-neutral and circular economy.

Due to the Covid-19 circumstances, it was held online and about 160 participants took part at this meeting including Member States authorities, ONGs and other stakeholders. Tudor Constantinescu, Principal Advisor to the Director General of DG ENER, introduced the Agenda, the speakers and chaired the meeting which was opened by the keynote speeches from the three Directors General of DG REGIO, DG ENER and DG ENV.

- 1) Marc Lemaître (Director General, DG REGIO) explained how the future cohesion policy regulations will offer the opportunity to be more ambitious for the European Green Deal, mentioning three specific examples of key policy references of the European Green Deal where cohesion policy's contribution would be evident. First, the circular economy agenda which offers multiple benefits once the right investments are planned, including environmental protection, efficient use of resources, local jobs, innovation and increased European strategic autonomy. Second, the Renovation Wave which should be captured as an opportunity not only to increase energy efficiency, but also to integrated renewable energy, circular economy and nature-based solutions in renovated buildings and to build resilient neighbourhoods. Third, the Just Transition Fund which will be a new fund within cohesion policy to alleviate the social and economic costs of those regions most heavily impacted by the transition to climate neutrality. It should be well targeted in terms of sectors and regions. Finally, the next decade of investments will be crucial if we want to attain the 2050 objectives.

- 2) Ditte Juul Joergensen (Director General, DG ENER) highlighted the need for a good energy policy, since energy accounts for three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions, describing a number of energy-related initiatives of the European Green Deal, including the Renovation Wave, the Energy System Integration Strategy, the Hydrogen Strategy, the Offshore Wind Strategy.

The recent evaluation of the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) showed that we are currently below some of the targets, and that a joint effort is required to be ready for the more ambitious 2030 targets. Crucially, many of the energy investments that are needed will also create numerous local jobs. The next MFF will be the most modern budget that the EU ever had.

- 3) Florika Fink-Hooijer (Director General, DG ENV) called for a systemic and holistic approach for implementing the European Green Deal as it has the potential to create local, long-lasting growth and jobs, including low-skilled jobs. There are significant investment needs in areas such as water and waste management, which have bearing on climate action. In a number of Member States, environmental investments are needed to close the implementation gap. Beyond investments in green areas, the 'do no significant harm' (DNSH) principle should be applied in all investments to make sure that they are future proof and contribute to the green transition.

The ensuing discussion emphasised that cohesion policy in the next period cannot be business as usual. The Directors-Generals called for a concerted approach and urged Member States that the time to act is now.

In the following session, speakers from the three DGs highlighted a few more specific initiatives in detail.

- 4) Paula Pinho (Head of Unit, DG ENER) elaborated on the NECPs and indicated that these plans are also an excellent basis for investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). More effort should be done on renewables and

energy efficiency taking advantage of the unprecedented financial package of Next Generation EU.

- 5) Sabine Bourdy (Head of Unit, DG ENV) stressed the need for good strategies to frame future investments and facilitate green reforms. Among notable transition reforms and investments, key areas are: the renovation wave for which, resource efficiency should be taken into consideration, empowering public buyers through mandatory Green Public Procurement criteria and targets in sectoral legislation and support the taxation shift from labour to environment with a view to enable the transition towards circular economy.
- 6) Peter Berkowitz (Head of Unit, DG REGIO) presented a toolkit developed for Managing Authorities to increase the ambition for the European Green Deal in the future generation of programmes. Four ways to proceed are suggested, namely investing in place-based innovation and smart economic transformation; deploying technological and social innovation on a large scale; facilitating phase-out of unsustainable practices, and ensuring a just transition for all regions.
- 7) In the context of green investments for a long-term recovery, Eric von Breka (Director, SG) presented how the RRF will work in practice, and how it could be complementary to other funds. A number of issues that are still to be finalised in the legislative negotiations, such as the operationalisation of the DNSH principle and the role of investments in gas, were clarified.

In the exchange of views with both networks, members took the floor to explain programming progress in their Member State.