

Summary

Meeting with Microsoft Corporate Leaders Network, 23/09/2021

Participants: Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, a member of his cabinet, officials from DG ENV and representatives of companies that are members of the Microsoft Corporate Leaders Network.

The meeting was chaired by Microsoft and focused on the European Green Deal, circular economy, sustainable finance and pollution.

The Commissioner gave an overview of the European Green Deal (EGD) and the direction it provided to guide the recovery efforts, including through the circular economy and zero pollution action plans and biodiversity strategy. He elaborated on the role of circularity for resilience to external shocks and competitiveness. Key components include the new Batteries Regulation and the Sustainable Products Initiative. He invited businesses to get involved in the Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform and noted that Sustainable Finance is key as well, referring to the role of EU taxonomy. The Commissioner also replied to specific questions by the industry representatives touching upon various topics, notably:

- As regards carbon removal, he recognised that carbon neutrality will require carbon removal in addition to emission reductions. Work is ongoing to establish certification for removal, and foster carbon sequestration/farming as a business mode. A Communication on carbon removal is scheduled for adoption still this year. Cooperation with businesses is essential in this area.
- The Commission will put forward a proposal on the F-Gas regulation in 2022.
- Electric vehicle recharging infrastructure needs to be improved indeed, as part of a coherent overall transition strategy for transport and mobility.
- As regards chemicals, the Chemicals Strategy aims at ensuring a competitive European industry. If it is proven that chemicals cannot be replaced and are essential then they would be allowed – but alternatives need to be developed as well if environmental impacts remain problematic. Classification and labelling, as well as the targeted opening of REACH, will take this into account.
- Concerning organic farming, more market demand is essential; and public procurement can help. The transition to organic farming for small farmers should also be facilitated, using e.g. digitalisation to ease administrative procedures.
- Textiles face the challenges of fast fashion and low product lifetime. Standardisation and broadening of ecodesign would be important in this regard. It would be also important to help and reward the first movers.
- The Commission is not against plastics as such; they have an important role to play. However recycling alone will not solve all problems. Longer use and reuse are needed as well. For recycling we need a secondary market to establish a full circle.
- The Digital Product Passport will take product specificities into account, while keeping in mind common objectives.
- The Commission is convinced of the need to preserve the functioning of the EU single market and use its leverage in the context of sustainable products policies.