

# Danish EU Presidency – Greenpeace priorities

Denmark will take the helm of the Council of the European Union from January 2012 at a crucial time for the future of Europe and its citizens. As government cuts start to bite and the debt and Euro-zone crises unfold, Europeans continue to be concerned about the environment. A recent survey found that 95% of Europeans think that environmental protection is important (Eurobarometer, June 2011). Over three quarters also believe that environmental measures would help boost economic growth.

The new Danish government will lead the political debate on fundamental issues that will help determine whether Europe banks on short-term financial gain at a great environmental cost or whether it favours long-lasting economic and environmental recovery supported by innovation, resource efficiency and clean development.

This paper briefly highlights some of the main environmental issues that will feature prominently on the EU agenda during the Danish EU presidency. These include: the future make-up of the EU energy sector; Europe's impact on the world's oceans; the freedom of Europeans to choose how their food is produced; and the elimination of toxic pollution in Europe's waterways.

## CLEAN ENERGY

Denmark has a unique chance to put Europe on a clean energy track. Germany's energy decision on the phase out of nuclear power, the irresistible rise of renewables and the huge potential for energy efficiency are opening up new possibilities for our energy future.

During the Danish presidency, the EU will refine a long-term vision for energy in Europe in the first half of this century (2050 energy roadmap). The EU is also expected to step up its commitment to renewables and efficiency to beyond 2020.

Greenpeace calls on the Danish EU presidency to:

- ~ secure agreement among European governments to prioritise renewable energy, energy efficiency and a more flexible EU power system, including smart electricity grid infrastructure. These three elements are critical in any future scenario for Europe's energy system;
- ~ ensure support from European countries for further binding renewable energy objectives, giving the European Commission a mandate to propose ambitious targets for 2030.

## END OVERFISHING

The future of Europe's seas is under threat. Corrupted by the vested interests of the fishing industry, cynical political bargaining and illegal conduct, EU fishing rules are making a bad situation worse. The EU's review of its fisheries policy – the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) – is probably the last chance to recover fish stocks and save the oceans for future generations.

A significant player in the European fishing sector, Denmark can help turn the tide on overfishing, restore healthy fish stock and ensure that a sustainable fishing sector has something left to fish.

Greenpeace calls on the Danish EU presidency to:

- ~ steer EU negotiations towards an agreement to end overfishing which recovers fish stocks and eliminates overcapacity in the European fleet by 2015;
- ~ table solutions that promote a shift away from destructive fishing, towards sustainable, low-impact fishing methods;
- ~ conduct transparent negotiations between EU governments that allow stakeholders to be heard and briefed before, during and after relevant discussions.

## GM-FREE FOOD

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Following a unanimous request by all 27 EU member states in 2008, the EU is undergoing a partial review of the system used to approve genetically modified (GM) crops. EU countries have also repeatedly criticised the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for failing to assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of GM crops (revelations in the media and a recent report by the EU Ombudsman have also raised questions about EFSA's independence).

In an attempt to address some of these concerns, the Commission has launched a proposal that would give EU countries the right to ban the cultivation of GM crops on their territory. However, despite this ongoing process and despite a pause in new authorisations following widespread rejection of the authorisation of an antibiotic-resistant GM potato in March 2010, the European Commission could attempt to resume approvals of GM crops in 2012.

Greenpeace urges the Danish EU presidency to:

- ~ strongly object to any attempt by the Commission to push through new GM crops. Any authorisation to cultivate a GM crop in Europe would be unacceptable until the process granting national bans is resolved and as long as the EU authorisation process is not substantially strengthened, with solid EFSA guidelines on environmental risk assessments;
- ~ reject any weakening of the draft law for national GM crop cultivation bans by ensuring that EU countries have a legally solid right to ban on environmental grounds, while making it mandatory for countries to take measures to prevent GM crop contamination and ensure that those responsible for GM contamination are held liable.

## CHEMICAL POLLUTION

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Europe's rivers and lakes and the fish that live in them are polluted by invisible toxic chemicals. As well as having a long-lasting impact on nature, human exposure to many of these dangerous chemicals is known to cause serious illnesses such as cancer.

Requirements in EU law to phase out the worst chemicals have so far failed to affect change on the ground. In 2012, the EU will review legislation on chemical pollution in freshwater. A review plan will be put forward by the Commission by the end of 2011.

Greenpeace calls on the Danish EU presidency to:

- ~ require European countries to phase out any dangerous chemicals found in water or sediment sampling;
- ~ set a clear phase out timetable in accordance with legal obligations to phase out toxic chemicals in water.

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**Greenpeace can provide comment and analysis on the following EU-issue areas:** energy (renewables, nuclear, coal, carbon capture and storage, transport, tar sands, biofuels), energy grids, subsidies, climate change, climate funding (EU budget/cohesion funds), emissions trading scheme, fisheries (common fisheries policy), marine protection, deforestation, agriculture (common agricultural policy), genetically modified crops, chemicals and toxic waste, water pollution...

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