



Weekly Briefing

**Slovenia social briefing:
Green Development Policy and Action
Helena Motoh**

China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.
 +36 1 5858 690
 office@china-cee.eu
 china-cee.eu

Green Development Policy and Action

Summary

As part of EU Slovenian green development policy is mostly marked by the overall EU strategies for sustainable development and carbon emissions reduction under the general guidelines of the European Green Deal commitments. Apart from that, during the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU, two other priorities are frequently addressed, biotic diversity and circular economy with waste management as one of its pillars. Two key documents, adopted in 2021 will mark these attempts most significantly, the Resolution on the Slovenian climate long-term strategy 2050 (ReDPS50), and the proposed new Environmental Protection Act (ZVO-2).

Priority topics of the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU

During the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU which takes place in the second half of 2021, between July 1 and December 31, three main environment-related topics are in the focus of Slovenian activities and initiatives: climate neutrality, biotic diversity, and circular economy.

The first priority topic follows the general guidelines of the European Green Deal, the initiatives and policies attempting to lead Europe to climate neutrality by the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Legislation tools and new mechanisms also announced under the title of “Fit for 55%”, were proposed by EU on July 14, establishing the structure to help Europe achieve the target of 55% reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared to the levels of 1990) and to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. The package includes a variety of new measures: a revised EU system of trading in carbon dioxide emissions, the revised system of sharing the load, new standards on carbon dioxide emissions for vehicles, land use strategies etc. According to the same principles more than a third of the NextGenerationEU recovery funds are to be used in relation to the goals set in the European Green Deal. According to the statements of the government, Slovenian presidency period will try to focus on the debate on this legislation package and seek to find the compromises to address the open issues, also by establishing an framework to provide the member states with the funding and resources needed to implement the measures of the green transition. Slovenia

is addressing this issue with the document, officially adopted on July 13 this year, the “Resolution on the Slovenian climate long-term strategy 2050”, which follows the same goals. Slovenia will also coordinate the viewpoints of the EU members at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference which will take place in Glasgow in November.

The second priority topic of the Council of the EU Presidency, biotic diversity, is an important pillar of Slovenian environmental politics, especially since joining the EU and adopting the Natura 2000 guidelines. Slovenia is a good example of preserved biotic diversity in Europe with just over 37% of its territory being included in the Natura 2000 framework in 355 protected areas of biotic diversity. More than a tenth of all Natura 2000 protected species and environments are in Slovenia – 205 animal species, 27 plant species and 60 typical natural environments are included in the programme protection list. Almost all Slovenian municipalities – 204 out of 212 – include Natura 2000 protected areas. In most of these 204, Natura 2000 protected areas make between 5 % and 30 % of the territory, while in 23 the protected areas make up to 80 % or more. Slovenia is also a significant case of how the protected areas are inhabited and cohabited with. 6 % of the entire population (around 128,000 people) live in the protected areas of Natura 2000, with 70 % of the areas being covered in forests and just over 20% being used as farmland. The measures of Natura 2000 were first adopted in state owned forests, with gradual transition to their implementation also in the privately owned forest areas from 2017 onwards.

The third priority topic of the Slovenian presidency is the circular economy is focused especially on the impact of proper waste management on the implementation of the circular economy model. An example of this orientations, stressed by the Ministry of Environment, is the debate on the new proposed Sustainable Batteries Regulation. This regulation, which will replace the outdated 2006 regulation, will address the issue of the entire life cycle of a product, but also solve the double-edged issue of the batteries as being one of the key elements in the green energy transition while also producing potentially very harmful waste, both in their production and the acquisition of the rare earths as in the waste removal phase.

Slovenian policy and legislation changes

In its application for the NExtGenerationEU recovery funding, the media and the NGOs mostly warned that the initial proposal, presented in the beginning of the year, did not follow the green development priority enough. The proposal which was then confirmed by the European Commission in the beginning of July and by the Financial Ministers of the EU at the

end of the same month. An estimated 42% of the 1.8 billion euros in grants and 705 million euros in loans will be directed towards the green transition goals. Apart from that, the statements of the Ministry of Environment also stress the main priorities of the national funding to be the national climate change fund, energy efficiency contribution, renewable energy contribution and resources directed at the development of transport infrastructure.

The 2021 is also marked by two important documents on the national level: Resolution on the Slovenian climate long-term strategy 2050 and the proposed new Environmental Protection Act (ZVO-2). The first was adopted in the National Assembly on July 13 with 49 votes in favour and 17 against. The strategy is based on the Paris Climate Accords and other related documents with a planned 80-90% reduction of greenhouse gases in comparison to the 2005 net emissions and full climate neutrality by 2050. It also sets the framework for the policies of adaptation to climate change and securing the climate safety of the population. It also provides guidelines for the fields of transport, energy, industry, agriculture, waste management, land use, land use change and forestry. Despite the overall satisfaction with the ideas of the document the process of adopting the strategy, however, was controversial and widely criticized. Statements on nuclear energy which were dubbed problematic by the parliamentary environment committee, was removed from the proposed draft at first, only to be reinserted with an amendment on the very day of the National Assembly vote. As result of this move that was seen as an evident political manipulation, nuclear energy is now a key part of the adopted document, interpreted as a long-term option for achieving the transfer to climate neutrality. Apart from the debate on the nuclear energy, the ambitiousness of the resolution was also questioned by some opposition groups, who claimed that despite the 2050 goals matched those set by the international agreements, the realization of the steps necessary to achieve them is postponed too far in the future.

The second important document, which is still in the final stages of preparation at the Ministry of the Environment, is the new Environmental Protection Act (ZVO-2). Among the motivations usually listed for the adoption of the new legal regulation are the issues of waste management and the attempt to further the agenda of the circular economy. The current system of managing the waste packaging, recently analysed in detail by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, is seriously deficient in reaching even basic environmental standards, while the companies responsible for packaging waste removal, do not fulfil their obligations. The standard proposed for the new Act is that the waste management becomes the responsibility of the producer and part of his extended responsibility. The proposed legislation also systematizes the entire waste management process and the system of selecting the companies

that handle the waste management phases. In more general terms the proposed Act aims to enable the transition to circular economy by stimulating production and consumption that reduce the negative load for the environment in the aspects of production, consumption, and waste, stimulating new greener technological solutions and the systematisation of compensations for environmental loads in pollution, waste, and the use of natural resources.

Conclusions

With key environmental topics being among the priorities of Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU, the three priority topics also reflect in the creation of several key documents on the national level, most important ones being the resolution on strategies for achieving long term climate goals and the new Environmental Protection Act focusing on strategies for achieving circular economy. With the former being partly controversial due to the tactics of its adoption and the doubts in how realistically its timeline is set, the second one seems to have a more promising applicable strategies and can be hoped to also more imminent results. With the unstable political situation, however, the adoption of the latter law, as well as the concrete implementation of the former, might be left for the next government term and is therefore unnecessarily being postponed for the next year.