



## The Estonian Presidency Programme for the Environment Council (ENVI)

Located on the shores of the Baltic Sea, Estonia is a small country, rich in nature. Its coastline, stretching almost 4 000 km, is peppered with more than 2 300 islands. Our territory of 45 000 km<sup>2</sup> is home to slightly over a million people, leaving plenty of open space for nature. More than half of Estonia is covered with forests, enabling us to enjoy some of the cleanest air in the world. The Natura 2000 network covers nearly 20% our territory, and helps preserve natural diversity: more than 50% of native habitats and species have been rated as being in a favourable conservation status. Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, constantly ranks among the top environmentally friendly cities in the world, from air quality to waste management practices.

Safeguarding the Earth's natural resources and ensuring a clean environment are of vital importance for both current and future generations. At the same time, we continue to be relentless in our pursuit of economic growth, jobs and social guarantees. In other words, although we want to live well, it should not be at the expense of our children. Is it possible to preserve our way of life without exhausting the resources of our home planet? It is beyond doubt that existing production and consumption patterns have become unsustainable. Fortunately, we have a blueprint for changing these irresponsibly destructive trends – the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** – to guide us to a better future.

A **sustainable Europe is one of the four priorities of the Estonian Presidency** and our motto is 'never waste an opportunity'. We are committed to promoting a healthy living environment that empowers ordinary people. However, environmental impacts and their consequences are transboundary; which means that regardless of the source, environmental problems will affect our citizens in one way or another. Therefore, the Estonian Presidency strives to ensure that the European Union remains unified and acts decisively on environmental issues at the international level.

### Priorities

We need to make smart choices in our pursuit of economic development. On this day and in this age we have come to the understanding that we need urgently to adopt a **more sustainable, more resource-efficient and more climate-resilient economic model** that is based on the principles of green growth. Therefore, the promotion of **circular economy** will be at the heart of our Presidency efforts, with a particular focus on climate change and **eco-innovation**.

### Climate change

In December 2015, 195 countries adopted the historic **Paris Agreement to combat climate change**. The agreement provides for a global plan of action in order to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C and to enhance national capacities to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. The European Union played a key role in brokering this comprehensive and forward-looking agreement, which lays the foundation for the sustainable development of our planet.

Now that this landmark agreement has entered into force, it is time for the European Union to move from words to action, and remain steadfast in advancing the climate agenda both regionally and globally. First





and foremost, the European Union must move decisively towards the adoption of necessary legislative measures. In this regard, Estonia intends to continue negotiations on four **important legislative proposals: the ETS directive, the ESR regulation, the LULUCF regulation and the aviation ETS proposal**. We aim to make substantial progress in moving these proposals forward, with consideration for the interests of Member States and finding as much common ground as possible.

In addition to taking action at the EU level to fulfil our obligations under the Paris Agreement, it is essential that the European Union demonstrates its unwavering commitment, unity, and decisive action at the international level as well. The COP 23 this November will be an important milestone in the context of continued efforts related to **implementing the Paris Agreement work programme**, especially in terms of advancing technical negotiations and establishing an effective design for the 2018 **Facilitative Dialogue** to assess our collective progress. In order to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the COP 23 outcomes should be aimed at laying a strong foundation for achieving the ambitious goals set for 2018, and the COP 24 next year.

To conclude, it is abundantly clear that all our activities and targets set for climate change and the circular economy, whether it is reducing greenhouse gas emissions or promoting a resource-efficient green economy and eco-innovation, are mutually supportive lines of action in our overall progress towards a more sustainable future.

## Circular economy

In a world of ever-intensifying production, economic development cannot come at the expense of the environment. Therefore, our production and consumption patterns, as well as innovation, must take environmental considerations into account. Such **innovative smart solutions and initiatives** that employ **new business models** and **reduce environmental impacts of production and consumption** are commonly referred to as **eco-innovations**.

Estonia will launch discussions on the topic of smart and environmentally friendly innovative solutions that have a proven track-record of success and could become more widespread. In order to support eco-innovation as such and facilitate the uptake of eco-innovative solutions, we intend to explore these issues in the wider context of enabling conditions provided by the Multiannual Financial Framework and the larger environmental regulatory framework, especially with regard to chemicals and plastics. Other important measures in this regard include raising public awareness of innovative solutions and environmental impacts of consumption, as well as simplifying the establishment of collaborative platforms and new IT-based business models.

During the six months of the Presidency, Estonia will host several important international events and will dedicate the month of October to highlighting various aspects of eco-innovation, including **hackathons on circular economy and climate change**, a **conference on green and circular procurement**, the **high-level flagship conference titled 'Nature-based Solutions: From Innovation to Common-use'**.

Ultimately, we aim to **adopt Council conclusions on eco-innovation at the Environment Council scheduled for December**. Our objective is to provide a coherent framework that would link several





upcoming communications from the European Commission with efforts on behalf of Member States to promote the wider use of eco-innovative solutions. Together with our trio partners, we will push for the integration of eco-innovation into the horizontal EU policies that are being developed for the post-2020 period.

Our main legislative task is to continue negotiations covering various aspects of waste management, which is one of the fundamental pillars of a resource-efficient circular economy. The **waste package** currently on the table includes proposals to set new targets for municipal waste and packaging waste, and to introduce a landfilling ban for separately collected waste, as well as requirements for the collection of construction and demolition waste by categories. Other important changes under discussion include establishing general requirements for extended producer responsibility schemes and implementing a common formula for the calculation of municipal waste targets. The trilogues on the waste package will take place during the Estonian Presidency, and we hope to conclude them by the end of our term.

