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EU Live Issues

Natura 2000

For the 5th experts meeting on 11 March, UEPG actively contributed with a strong delegation, ensuring that comments and proposals for amendments to the draft Guidance Paper were considered.

The UEPG delegation included Jeffrey Thompson and Ingo Hammwöhner from the OAM-Deme Mineralien GmbH (Germany) representing the Marine Aggregates Producers, Michael Schulz from Hülskens/BKS (Germany), Peter Wessel from MIRO (Germany) and Michel Perrot from GSM Granulats (France). Co-Ordinated by Antony Fell and Sandrine Devos from the UEPG General Secretariat, the delegation intervened where deemed necessary.



Ensuring access to Marine Aggregates

Ingo Hammwöhner (left) and Jeffrey Thompson from OAM-Deme Mineralien GmbH (Germany).

For the Marine Aggregates section of the Guidance document, UEPG advocated that the terrestrial model of Natura 2000 should not be applied to the Marine Environment due to significant differences, and demonstrated the need for a clarification of the terminology.

Background

The Nature Directives do not create an absolute exclusion from Natura 2000 sites to

activities such as mineral extraction. Adequate interpretation and implementation of the Natura 2000 provisions is essential to reduce uncertainty and avoid any problems for the industry which might arise from a misinterpretation of these Directives.

In order to clarify these provisions the Guidance Paper needs to provide a better understanding on the application of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive for the development of non-energy extractive activities as well as for improved dialogue between the industry and other stakeholder groups.

During the 5th meeting, environmental NGOs and government environmental agencies were much stronger represented. UEPG and its members in cooperation with other European sectors will have to argue that this Guidance document is designed to correctly interpret the Natura 2000 Directives and to facilitate sustainable access to resources.

Next steps

The final draft version will be circulated by 6 April to stakeholders and EU Member States for further comments to be commented on and discussed at a last meeting in May. The date and venue would be communicated in due course.

Sectoral Social Dialogue

On 2 March, Dirk Fincke, Public Affairs Manager in the UEPG General Secretariat presented the activities and projects of UEPG as well as the objectives in the area of health & safety to the members of the Commission Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the Extractive Industries (SSDCEI). UEPG fulfils the criteria and would restrict its SSDCEI membership to health, safety and training.

The employers side, in particular IMA-Europe and Euromines supported the application of UEPG and welcomed the potential contribu-

EU Insight is edited by the UEPG General Secretariat as part of its communication service to UEPG Members.

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tion to the Sectoral Social Dialogue. UEPG has asked its members to update the Social Dialogue questionnaire dated 2005 and to provide further information on their working relationship with national Unions.



UEPG to become a Social Partner

From left: Jean-Pierre Damm, President of the Committee, Doroša Dlouchy, Industrial Relations Officer, DG Employment and Dirk Fincke, Public Affairs Manager, UEPG General Secretariat.

Next steps

The SSDCEI will decide on the UEPG application during its plenary session on 4 June 2009.

Soil Protection

The Czech Presidency's aim is to bring to a vote at the plenary session in June a new text on the Soil Protection Framework Directive. To achieve this goal the Czech Presidency will present each month a new proposal to the Council Environment Working Group. As the topic is likely to lead to a lot of comments and challenges from Member States, especially concerning the subsidiarity principle, the Presidency will face for the moment many difficulties.

The last proposal was presented on 16 March and discussed at the Council Environment Working Group meeting on 23 March. The blocking minority was still strongly present, with very active members against the new proposal. Some new Member States were raising additional points. However in Annex II, mining installations are still mentioned in the list of activities causing soil contamination.

Life +

LIFE+ stands for "L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement". It is the only Financial Instrument for Environment. Created in 1992, as a LIFE programme, its main function is to provide financial support for projects that contribute to the development, updating and implementation of Community environmental policy. LIFE+ Unit is part of DG Environment at the European Commission. One of the objectives of the Unit is

to involve more and more companies as private bodies into the LIFE+ programme.

Miette Dechelle, new Public Affairs Assistant has previously worked on a LIFE+ project for the Natural Regional Park of the Catalan Pyrenees; therefore, she introduced this funding stream to our members at the Environment Committee Meeting in Istanbul. During her presentation she explained the 50% co-funding European programme, the 2009 total Budget of EUR 250 million, the three categories to apply, the procedure in this European competition, the beneficiaries and the calendar.



Presenting funding potential for companies

Miette Dechelle (right) and Thomas Guillot from Holcim Bulgaria during the UEPG Environment Committee meeting.

The launch of the event will be on the 15 May 2009 and the deadline for applicants to send proposals to National Members authorities will be on 5 September 2009. After the evaluation, eligibility and revision procedures the successful projects will start in September 2010. For more Information please look on:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/life_plus.htm

UEPG News

UEPG Committee meetings

On 16-17 March, UEPG members address current live issues and next steps for our sector. The Committee meetings were hosted and co-organised by our Turkish colleagues from AGÜB.

Guest speaker was Mr. Fevzi Isbilir, General Manager of the Environmental Impact Assessment Department which is part of the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Mr. Isbilir explained that the Turkish government is applying EU Directives after having translated the text into Turkish. For example, newly established companies have to implement the IPPC Directive. This binds the Turkish Aggregates

Industry much closer to Europe and the EU institutions.

UEPG welcomed once again István Horányi representing the Hungarian Aggregates Industry and for the first time Thomas Guillot representing the Bulgarian Aggregates Industry.

Next Committee meetings

29-30 October 2009	Brussels
18-19 March 2010	venue to be communicated
4-5 October 2010	Brussels

UEPG Enlargement

On 23 March, Denis Mertens, UEPG President and Dirk Fincke, Public Affairs Manager presented UEPG activities and added value to its members.

UEPG was invited to Sofia by Thomas Guillot, Aggregates & Readymix Director from Holcim Bulgaria. He and several other colleagues are driving the initiative to establish a Bulgarian Aggregates Association and to apply for UEPG membership.



Identifying and addressing key challenges for Bulgaria

From left: Tanya Popova, Interpreter; Thomas Guillot, Holcim Bulgaria; Denis Mertens and Dirk Fincke, UEPG.

Main concerns of Bulgarian Aggregates Producers are the grey economy, i.e. the illegal extraction, indirect aggregates taxation, the rapid increase of Natura 2000 areas sterilising future reserves and the improvement of health & safety.

Next steps

After identifying the main challenges of the Bulgarian Aggregates Industry, participants agreed to draft a proposal establishing a National Aggregates Association. Member companies would have to sign a code of good conduct and committing to sustainable development putting political pressure on the grey economy.