

PF Santé Publique - FOD Volksgezondheid)

From:
Sent: jeudi, 4 janvier 2024 11:35
To:
Subject: FW: Belgium in the hot seat

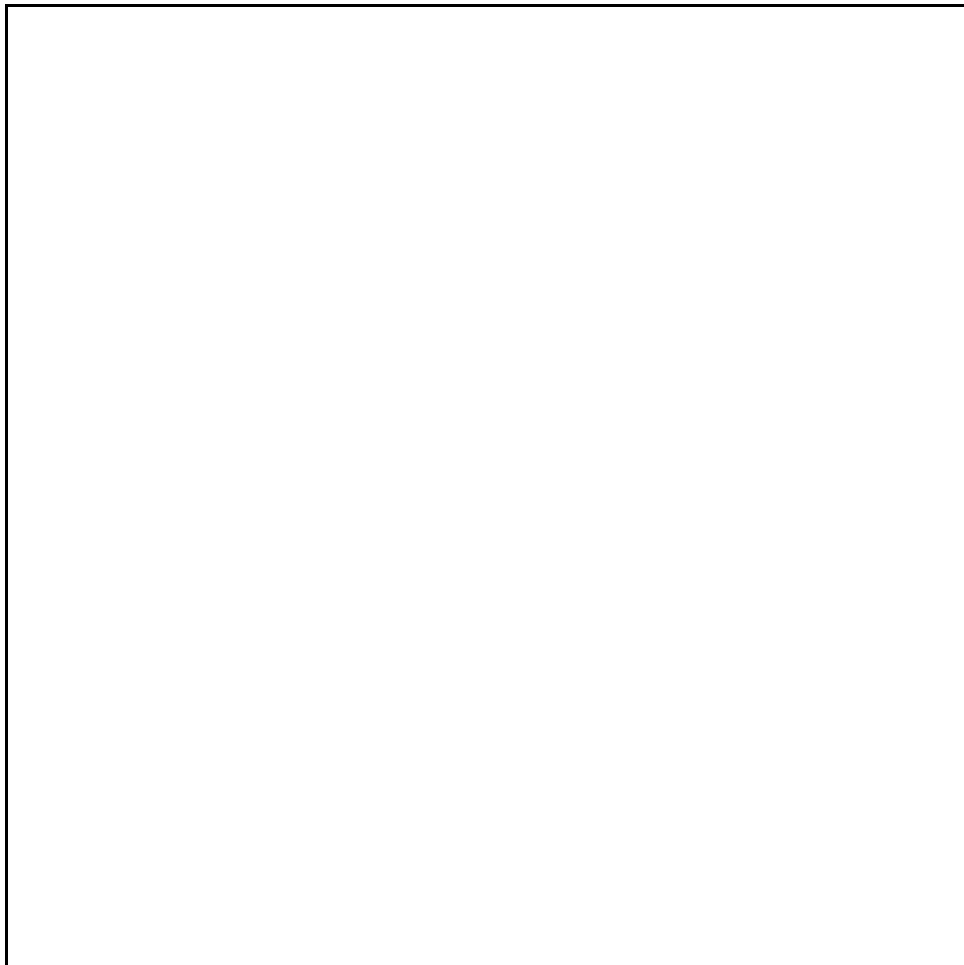
Info reçue d'une RP

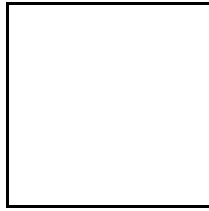
Peut-être à faire circuler, mais je vous laisse juge.

Von: POLITICO Pro Sustainability Insights Europe
Gesendet: Dienstag, 2. Januar 2024 16:00:36 (UTC+01:00) Amsterdam, Berlin, Bern, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna
An: .BRUEEU POL-PR-1-EU Fricke, Julian Christopher Wilhelm
Betreff: Belgium in the hot seat

Politico Pro Sustainability Insights Europe is a service provided by POLITICO. It is not intended to be used for the purpose of disseminating information or for any other purpose. The content of this email is confidential and may be subject to copyright. It is not to be distributed outside the intended recipients. If you have received this email in error, please do not print, copy, retransmit, or otherwise use the information. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this message in error. If you are not an intended recipient, please do not print, copy, retransmit, or otherwise use the information. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this message in error. If you are not an intended recipient, please do not print, copy, retransmit, or otherwise use the information. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this message in error.

Politico Pro Sustainability Insights Europe





[View in your browser or listen to audio](#)

By LEONIE CATER

with LOUISE GUILLOT

TODAY'S TOP LINE — We have a cheat sheet with everything you need to know about the Belgian presidency.

Happy New Year! As we roll into 2024, Bloomberg has penned a [list](#) of 12 new year's resolutions for more sustainable living — including learning to spot greenwashing.

Share your tips, tricks and tales with Louise Guillot at lguillot@politico.eu and Leonie Cater at lcater@politico.eu. Find us on X at [@l_guillot](#) and [@LeonieACater](#), and on Bluesky at [@l-guillot.bsky.social](#) and [@leoniecater.bsky.social](#).

BELGIAN PRESIDENCY

BELGIUM TAKES THE REINS: The Belgians are in the driving seat of the Council of the EU as of Monday. Let's take a look at what's in store for the next six months, including upcoming challenges, people to know and key files.

Tricky timing: Belgium faces a difficult presidency calendar, one that caused organizational headaches in the run-up to the handover. Not only must key legislative files be wrapped up by February so they don't fall through the legislative cracks ahead of the European Parliament election in June, but the country itself will be preparing for an election on June 9. More on that from my colleagues Barbara, Camille and Pieter [here](#).

Looking at you, Budapest: Belgium will also seek to influence the agenda of the next European Commission, while keeping an eye on the country that is due to succeed it in the Council presidency: Hungary, led by Euroskeptic Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

It's complicated: Belgian politics are [pretty complex](#). As if the three regions and their individual competencies weren't enough, the federal government, led by Alexander De Croo, is a seven-party cabinet consisting of 14 ministers in a coalition of the Flemish Open Vld, sp.a, CD&V and Groen, and the Walloon Mouvement Réformateur, Parti Socialiste and Ecolo.

(Not) on the same page: But while Belgium tries to present a unified voice in the EU, its plethora of political parties means it doesn't always come across that way, as our recent interviews with (staunchly anti-Green Deal) [Agriculture Minister David Clarinval](#) and (staunchly pro-Green Deal) Brussels Region [Minister for Climate and Environment Alain Maron](#) show.

Brussels to Brussels: Nevertheless, the government has said that it will put the bloc's energy and climate transition at the heart of its priorities.

Sustainability wishlist: The list of files Belgium hopes to finalize during its presidency includes new [sustainable packaging rules](#), the revision of EU waste water treatment [rules](#), new CO2 standards for trucks, a carbon removals certification [framework](#), a [proposal](#) to restrict the use of mercury, and the revision of EU air quality [guidelines](#). More details in Louise's interview with Maron [here](#).

Names to know: The Belgian decision makers whom sustainability wonks should watch out for in the coming months include...

— **Alain Maron**, Brussels’ environment and climate minister, will be in the driving seat of the presidency. As per Belgium’s own rotating system to represent the country in the Council on environmental matters — as this is a regional competence — Maron will play a key role in ongoing talks. Maron is a member of the francophone green party Ecolo and has been in charge of the green transition of the region of Brussels since 2019. Together with his green colleague Zakia Khattabi and Barbara Trachte, he’ll [lead](#) Ecolo’s list for the Belgian regional election in June.

— **David Clarinval**, Belgium’s federal agriculture minister, who is going to be particularly busy in the next months trying to find consensus among the EU27 about the Commission’s proposal to halve pesticides use by mid-century. Governments still have to agree on their common position on the file, while the Parliament already rejected the proposal altogether in November.

— **Zakia Khattabi** is Belgium’s federal environment and climate minister in charge of the Green Deal. She’s been a strong advocate for ambitious green policies at the EU level and called for stronger efforts to address pollution from plastic and PFAS substances, also known as forever chemicals. Khattabi also [announced](#) in December that she will run for the post of minister-president of the region of Brussels in June’s election.

— **Frédérique Ries**, the Renew Europe MEP from Belgium who’s leading the Parliament’s work on the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.

— **Pierre Cartuyvels**, the Coreper I ambassador who was appointed in 2020, and his right hand, **Timon Bo Salomonson**. Cartuyvels will oversee the work on all sustainability files during the presidency and represent EU countries during inter-institutional negotiations. He’ll have to make progress on a number of files including the Green Claims Directive, the Right to Repair Directive, the revision of air quality rules, the packaging and packaging waste regulation and the review of urban waste water treatment rules. He’s also expected to finalize negotiations on the Net Zero Industry Act and the carbon removals certification framework.

— Belgium’s team of attachés, who are the experts of the permanent representation on all things sustainability. That includes **Stéphanie Baclin**, who coordinates the environment team; **Adly Manseri**, who deals with chemicals and products policy; **Céline Ubbelohde**, who works on environment and energy issues; **Joanna De Smedt**, in charge of climate files; **Marie Vennin**, also an environment attaché; and **Marjan Decroos**, who works on environmental issues for the Flemish regional government. There is also **Amandine Deswert**, who works on critical raw materials and NZIA, and **Quirine Orye**, who is tasked with following animal welfare legislation.

WASTE

NATIONAL WASTE RULES OVERHAUL: With a new year come new rules — including on waste and packaging. In the Netherlands, for example, as of Monday customers eating or drinking in hotels, cafes or restaurants won’t receive disposable cups or containers with plastic in them. “Reusable tableware is the standard,” [writes](#) the national government. Offices, company canteens, schools, sports clubs, associations, closed events and amusement parks have also had to switch to reusable cups and containers from Monday.

Plastic prohibition: Over in France, businesses had until December 31 to get rid of plastic packaging for fruit and vegetables, except for 29 products. FranceInfo has more [here](#).

Milking it: Also from Monday, in Germany a deposit of at least 25 cents must also be charged on milk, mixed milk drinks and dairy products in single-use plastic bottles, which will be returned to customers when they return the empty bottles to a deposit machine. This also applies to cocoa, coffee drinks, kefir or yogurt. [According to](#) the environment ministry, in future, empty bottles of milk and mixed milk drinks can be returned wherever drinks are sold in single-use plastic bottles, like in supermarkets. The deposit requirement has been in effect for most single-use plastic beverage bottles since 2022.

Coming up: By the end of this year, EU countries [will have to ensure](#) that producer responsibility schemes are established for all packaging.

CLIMATE IMPACTS

HEATING UP: What's hot in 2024? The planet. A strong El Niño event is boosting global temperatures on top of man-made warming, and many scientists expect this year to temporarily breach the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold. This wouldn't yet constitute a breach of the Paris Agreement target, which refers to long-term warming.

More weather extremes to come: Europe's Copernicus climate change service [reckons](#) that El Niño will peak in the next two months, but the phenomenon's influence on global average temperatures [is typically greatest](#) after its peak. That could mean more record temperatures, as well as other extreme events — warmer ocean temperatures can fuel storms and heavy precipitation.

Unprecedented flooding in Germany: Several rivers burst their banks following intense rainfall in northwestern Germany after Christmas. "We have never had a flood of this magnitude before," said Stefan Weil, premier of Lower Saxony, noting: "Experts have been warning for a long time that the increasingly frequent extreme weather events are linked to climate change." The region mobilized some 100,000 people to combat the floods. More heavy rain is [expected](#) this week. Several regions in France and Belgium are also on flood alert.

POLLUTION

BELGIUM POSTPONES DECISION ON DOMESTIC FLIGHT BAN: The Belgian government will study the economic impact of domestic flights, which Transport Minister Georges Gilkinet [had proposed](#) to ban. At a December 22 government meeting, center-right parties Mouvement Réformateur, Open VLD and CD&V asked for more precise data on the potential impact of such a ban on regional airports, *Le Soir* [reported](#).

ICYMI: In 2022 Belgium recorded 1,822 domestic flights — including 402 movements between Brussels and Liège airports (a distance of about 85 kilometers); 273 between Brussels and Charleroi (55 km); and 242 between Brussels and Antwerp (less than 40 km). Most of those flights were by private jets. Gilkinet's draft targets both airlines and private jets — which, the minister argued, are 11 times more polluting per passenger than large airplanes, and 50 times more polluting per passenger than trains. More on that [here](#).

GREEN GLANCES

Doctors at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children are being encouraged to consider air pollution levels at their patients' home addresses when assessing the causes of their illnesses, under a new pilot scheme. The Guardian has the [story](#).

Reuters [reports](#) that Brazil is fighting illegal gold mining as it spreads from Indigenous lands into government-protected conservation areas.

A study of the hairs of 50 species from Poland's Białowieża Forest, collected over seven decades, reveals the invisible effects of fossil fuel emissions. Read the full story in [El País](#).

THANKS to: Tommaso Lecca, Zia Weise, Antonia Zimmermann, Camille Gijs and Bartosz Brzeziński.

This email alert has been sent for your exclusive use as a POLITICO Pro subscriber. Forwarding or reproducing the newsletter without the express, written permission of POLITICO Pro is a violation of the POLITICO Pro license agreement.

This email was sent to pol-pr-1-eu@brue.auswaertiges-amt.de

[Unsubscribe](#) [Update settings](#)

POLITICO SRL · Rue de la Loi 62 · Brussels 1040 · Belgium

