

Briefing Note in preparation for the

**Foreign and European Affairs Standing Committee
Meeting**

Proposal for the introduction of a Green Card



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PARLIAMENT OF MALTA

Background

EU National Parliaments are discussing the possibility of introducing a new initiative with the aim of initiating a positive dialogue between national parliaments and the European Commission. Such a dialogue, (referred as a green card), will allow national parliaments to contribute positively and constructively to the development of the policies at EU level. A green card should give the opportunity for national parliaments to contribute on topics even before the proposal for legislation is published by the European Commission. This proposal was initiated by the Danish Folketing and it is being pushed forward by the House of Lords.

According to the Bi-Annual Report of the Conference of the European and Foreign Affairs Committee in the EU (COSAC), 23 national Parliaments/Chambers (including the Maltese House of Representatives) expressed their support to the idea of introducing a “green card” that would build on the existing political dialogue. Three chambers indicated their opposition.¹ In its contributions adopted on 2 June 2015, COSAC stated that the “green card” would constitute a valuable opportunity for willing national Parliaments to play a proactive role in the EU agenda-setting process with a view to contribute further to the good functioning of the EU. The main issue about the introduction of a Green Card Procedure is more about the procedure that is going to be introduced. There are still discussions going on whether the green card should have its own mechanism similar to the yellow and orange cards. It is probable however, that such an introduction would require a change in the existing Treaties.

Pilot Project on the Circular Economy

The UK House of Lords is proposing that in order to initiate, instead of formulating first a procedure for the establishment of a green card, national parliaments should select a topic and include their input as positive contribution to the European Commission. Hon Zammit Dimech supported the House of Lords’ proposed way forward during the LIII COSAC in Riga. The topic that has been proposed by the House of Lords is the circular economy. The aim of such a proposal is move from a “take-make-consume and dispose” pattern of growth towards an economy based on re-using, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products.

The Commission is planning to present a new communication on the circular economy later on this year. The subject of the circular economy was also discussed with European Commissioner Karmenu Vella during a joint committee meeting held in the Maltese House of Representatives. Commissioner Vella informed that there is a public consultation on Circular Economy that will remain open until 20 August 2015.

Input given by the Line Ministry

The Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change, in its feedback stated that the original Commission proposal on the circular economy which was

¹ Those against the introduction of the green card as being proposed; Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*, Finnish *Eduskunta* and Italian *Camera dei deputati*.

published in July 2014 and retracted to be improved in December 2014, already provided for tackling food waste by even introducing an aspirational 30% target for the reduction of food waste.

In this regard, it is important to note that from a Maltese perspective efforts are being made at a national level to ensure that there is more reduction of food waste (even indicated by means of Malta's Waste Management Plan 2014-2020). Notwithstanding, Malta had internal preliminary reservations with the original Commission proposal to set a EU-wide food waste reduction target. Data is currently poor on food waste in Malta and the EU level. Moreover, national efforts so far have not been enough to confidently place Malta as a well-performing Member State in the area of reducing food waste if a targeted approach is to be taken at the European level.

As a result of the above, the House of Lords' recommendations for a strategic approach to the reduction of food waste rather than a targeted approach, could be positively received by Malta. Malta may still need to make some amendments and further efforts if the strategic approach is adopted but this is still a more flexible way forward than a targeted approach. The recommendations made in the annexed proposal do not suggest more binding legislations. On the contrary, the recommendations refer to guidelines and the sharing of best practices as well as improving data collection, which as highlighted above is also considered necessary in the case of Malta.

Conclusion

The main aim of the introduction of a Green Card Procedure is to enhance positive dialogue between National Parliaments and the EU institutions, the European Commission in particular. It should enhance also the role of national parliaments in the decision making process of the European Union.

It is recommended that, in view of the fact that such mechanism is intended to achieve positive dialogue between national parliaments and the European Commission and also due to the fact that the proposal drafted by the House of Lords on the circular economy is in line with Malta's position, the Foreign and European Affairs Committee should co-sign the letter as drafted by the House of Lords.

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