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Informal agreement on invasive alien species

The Permanent Representatives Committee of the Council¹ today approved a compromise text provisionally agreed between the Hellenic Presidency of the Council and the European Parliament on a draft regulation on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. It thereby endorsed the agreement reached between the Presidency of the Council and representatives of the European Parliament on 5 March.

"The Hellenic Presidency worked in an efficient and speedy manner to conclude the negotiations on the complex and controversial new regulation on invasive alien species in a very short period of time. For the first time, we have a legal instrument to address the threats posed by invasive alien species, which are one of the major causes of biodiversity loss and are estimated to cause the Union economic damage of at least EUR 12 billion per year," said the president of the Council, Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change Ioannis Maniatis.

The regulation lays down rules to prevent, minimise and mitigate the adverse impacts of the introduction and spread, both intentional and unintentional, of invasive alien species on biodiversity, the related ecosystem services, as well as other economic and social impacts. To this end, the Commission will adopt an open list of invasive alien species of Union concern, which will be regularly updated and reviewed at the latest every six years. Species on the list may not be intentionally brought into the territory of the EU, nor may they be kept, bred, transported to, from or within the Union, placed on the market, grown or released into the environment.

¹ The Permanent Representatives Committee is composed of the ambassadors of the 28 EU member states. Its role is to prepare decisions of the Council.

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The new regulation also addresses invasive alien species of regional concern and of member state concern. It allows member states to identify, from their national list of invasive alien species of member state concern, species native or non-native to the Union that require enhanced regional cooperation. Such regional cooperation will be facilitated by the Commission.

The regulation also establishes a surveillance system for early detection and measures for rapid eradication. Furthermore, member states must provide for penalties if the regulation is not correctly applied.

The regulation also provides for a system of authorisations and permits to allow certain activities based on invasive alien species.

The Commission will assess the application of this regulation by 1 June 2021.

Background

Invasive alien species are species that are initially transported through human action outside their natural range across ecological barriers, and then survive, reproduce and spread and have negative impacts on the ecology of their new location as well as serious economic and social consequences. It has been estimated that, of the 12 000 or so alien species that are found in the European environment, between 10 % and 15 % have reproduced and spread, causing environmental, economic and social damage. They are estimated to cost the EU at least EUR 12 billion per year.

Next steps

The agreement paves the way for the formal adoption of the new regulation. The text still needs to be formally adopted by the Parliament, whose vote in plenary is expected to take place on 15 April 2014, and by the Council, which is due to take its decision after the vote in Parliament.
