



EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU  
Celebrating 40 years of environmental action

# EEB 40th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE REPORT

## “EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS: THE CHALLENGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY”

SQUARE-BRUSSELS MEETING CENTRE  
Brussels, 1-2 December 2014

# About the European Environmental Bureau

## Mission

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is the environmental voice of citizens in Europe, standing for environmental justice, sustainable development and participatory democracy. We seek to ensure a healthy environment and rich biodiversity throughout the Europe Union and beyond.

## Members

Established in 1974, the EEB works in close cooperation with the 140 member organisations present in more than 30 countries, to advance ambitious environmental and sustainability policies in Europe.

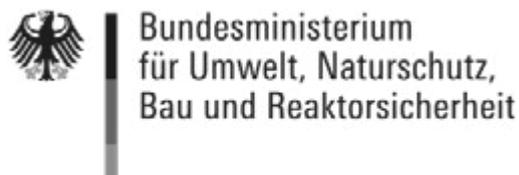
## Partners

Our philosophy is to work together with like-minded people, organisations and funders to effect positive change for the environment. EEB is a core partner of the Spring Alliance, a coalition of European networks from several sectors, a founding partner of the Green 10, the informal grouping of ten leading environmental networks in Europe, and member of the European Task Force of the Beyond2015 coalition, working to advance the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

## Governance

With a Secretariat of some 30 staff members and a Board of 30 national members, the EEB brings expertise, outreach and financial, administrative and operational effectiveness to its work to promote higher standards of environmental and sustainability policy, and maintains high standards of organisational governance, as a member of the International NGO Accountability Charter.

## The EEB gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the following



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# 1. Overview

On 1-2 December 2014 the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) celebrated forty years of environmental action by holding a high-level conference that explored the environmental challenges facing Europe and the wider world and the opportunities for overcoming them.

December 2014 provided an especially timely moment to take stock and look at future challenges, with a new European Parliament in place, and a new European Commission and President of the European Council taking up office just before the conference. The conference provided an important opportunity for stakeholder debate prior to two globally important events – the UN Summit in September 2015 where a post-2015 sustainable development agenda would be adopted and the COP21 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015.

The EEB conference took a bold look at the prospects for the forty years to come and then focussed on the immediate priorities and challenges facing the new European Commission, European Parliament and Member States. It included provocative debates on the direction in which Europe should be heading and how the environmental movement could be more effective. The way in which the new

Commission had started to deal with the environment was a particular focus for discussion, in light of President Juncker's plans to focus on growth, competitiveness, jobs and better regulation, rather than sustainable development and the environment.

Including high-level speakers from the European institutions, academia and civil society, the EEB conference provided a unique opportunity to learn and share. It brought together nearly 400 environmentalists and other stakeholders from all over Europe for a day and a half of intensive debates in Brussels.

Extensive documentation from the conference, including videos, photos and presentations, can be found on the conference website:

<http://www.2014.eebconference.eu/documentation/>



# 2. Conference programme

MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2014

## Morning

**8.00 – 9.00:** Welcome coffee and registration [Silver Foyer]

**9.00 – 9.20:** Opening session [Copper Hall]

Message of welcome and introduction to the programme by Mikael Karlsson, EEB President

Keynote speech by Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

**9.20 – 10.30:** **Module 1: Forty years of European environmental policy: successes, failures and lessons learned [Copper Hall]**

This module will explore the successes and failures of the past 40 years of environmental policy from the perspective of civil society and the EU Institutions.

**Moderator:** Michael Scoullou, Professor of Environmental Chemistry, Athens University, Chair of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development and former EEB President (1986-1992)

**Presentation:** John Hontelez, Chief Advocacy Officer at Forest Stewardship Council and former EEB Secretary General (1996-2011)

### Panel debate:

Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler, Director of EU Coordination on Environment, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria

Ludwig Krämer, Director of ClientEarth's European Union Aarhus Centre

**10.30 – 11.00:** Tea/coffee [Silver Foyer]

**11.00 – 13.00:** **Module 2: The next 40 years: placing sustainability at the heart of Europe's policies [Copper Hall]**

This module will address the prospects for the environment over the next four decades under various scenarios and, within that broad framework, focus on the EU's priorities for the next five years.

**Moderator:** Mikael Karlsson, EEB President

**Video message:** Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

**Presentation:** Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director, European Environment Agency

### Panel debate:

Kirsten Brosbøl, Minister for the Environment, Denmark

Francesco La Camera, Director General, Italian Ministry for Environment and Protection of Land and Sea, on behalf of the Italian Presidency of the EU



Maria Krautzberger, President of the German Federal Environment Agency

Kathleen van Brempt MEP, Vice-Chair, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament

Thomas Becker, Chief Executive Officer, European Wind Energy Association

David Baldock, Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy

**13.00 – 14.15: Lunch [Silver Foyer]**

*Afternoon*

**Module 3: Elements of a sustainable transition [Copper Hall]**

This module will explore in more detail some of the areas which need to be addressed in the context of an accelerated transition to sustainability. It will open with several short dynamic ‘appetiser’ presentations in plenary then go into breakout sessions for more in-depth discussions before concluding in a plenary session.

**Moderator:** Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General

**14.15 – 15.15: Will it be enough to step up incremental change or should we be looking for paradigm shift? [Copper Hall]**

Inspirational and provocative perspectives on this horizontal question from:

Connie Hedegaard, former EU Commissioner for Climate Action:

*“Finding a credible response to the threat of irreversible and catastrophic climate change”*

Simon Upton, Director, Environment Directorate, OECD: *“Why business can no longer be as usual”*

Sunita Narain, Director General, Centre for Science and the Environment, India: *“What the rest of the world expects from Europe in the follow-up to Rio+20” (video message)*

Joachim Spangenberg, Vice-President, Sustainable Europe Research Institute: *“The necessity and possibility of reducing our ecological footprint”*

**15.25 – 17.00: Parallel breakout sessions [Follow signs for locations]**

A) ***Economy and environment***

**Moderator:** Pieter de Pous, EEB Policy Director

**Rapporteur:** Kitty van der Heijden, Director for Europe, World Resources Institute

**Speakers:**

Józef Niemiec, Deputy General Secretary, European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC)

Jacqueline Cottrell, Senior Policy Advisor, Green Budget Europe

Aniol Esteban, Head of Environmental Economics, New Economics Foundation

B) ***Europe in the wider world***

**Moderator:** Leida Rijnhout, Director, Global Policies and Sustainability Unit, EEB

**Rapporteur:** Déirdre de Búrca, Director, Advocacy & Justice for Children, World Vision EU



**Speakers:**

Hans Stielstra, Deputy Head of Unit, Global Sustainability, Trade and Multilateral Agreements, European Commission

Bernd Nilles, Secretary General, CIDSE

Charlotte Christiaens, Coordinator, CATAPA

**C) *Democracy, accountability and the rule of law***

**Moderator:** Liz Hiester, ClientEarth, EEB Vice-President

**Rapporteur:** Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe

**Speakers:**

Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director of Implementation, Governance and Semester, DG Environment, European Commission

Gita Parihar, Head of Legal, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Prisca Merz, Initiator, End Ecocide in Europe

**D) *The climate crisis***

**Moderator:** Ulf Björnholm Ottosson, Head of Office, Brussels Liaison Office to the EU Institutions, Regional Office for Europe, United Nations Environment Programme

**Rapporteur:** Tom Burke, Founding Director and Chairman, E3G

**Speakers:**

Monica Frassoni, President, European Alliance to Save Energy

Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes, Vice-President of the European Renewable Energies Federation

Mark Johnston, Senior Adviser on energy, environment and climate change at the European Policy Center

**E) *The threat to nature***

**Moderator:** Luc Bas, Director of EU Representative Office, IUCN

**Rapporteur:** Ariel Brunner, Policy Director, BirdLife Europe

**Speakers:**

Francois Wakenhut, Head of Unit for Biodiversity, Natural Capital Directorate, DG Environment, European Commission

Monica Verbeek, Executive Director, Seas at Risk

Hannah Mowat, Forests and Climate Campaigner, FERN

**F) *The threat to health***

**Moderator:** Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance

**Rapporteur:** Génon K. Jensen, Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

### **Speakers:**

Axel Singhofen, Adviser on Health and Environment Policy for the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament

Michael Warhurst, Executive Director, CHEM Trust

Christer Ågren, Director, Air Pollution and Climate Secretariat (AirClim)

#### **17.10 – 17.55: Reports back from breakout sessions [Copper Hall]**

The rapporteurs of the individual breakout sessions report back to plenary

#### **17.55 – 18.00: Closing remarks [Copper Hall]**

Closing remarks: Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General

### *Evening*

#### **18.30–20.30: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception including the EEB 12 Stars Award Ceremony for exceptional contributions to the cause of environmental sustainability in Europe [BIP House of the Capital Region, Rue Royale 2-4, 1000 Brussels]**

Guest speakers include Hubert David, the EEB's first Secretary General (1974-1982)

## **TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2014**

#### **09.00-09.30: Registration [SQUARE-BRUSSELS MEETING CENTRE - “Ravenstein” entrance on 2 Rue Ravenstein, 1000 Brussels]**

### **Module 4: Strengthening the movement for environmental change [Hall 100]**

This module will focus on how to achieve the policy objectives identified in the previous modules, benefiting from feedback from key partners and the experiences of other stakeholders groups.

#### **9.30 – 9.55: Opening session**

Moderator: Ralph Hallo, former EEB President

Keynote speech: Janez Potocnik, former EU Commissioner for the Environment

Discussion

#### **9.55 – 10.00: Introduction to world café discussion**

Moderator: Angelo Caserta, Regional Director, BirdLife Europe, Chair of the Green 10

Format for each round of discussion: short thought-provokers (5 mins each), table discussions with a set of questions to guide discussion (15-20 mins), short reports back on key points with roving microphone (5-10 mins)

#### **10.00 – 10.40: Key strengths and weaknesses of the environmental movement in Europe**

Perspective: Stefan Scheuer, Director of Stefan Scheuer Consulting and former EEB Policy Director

Perspective: Jagoda Munic, Chair, Friends of the Earth International, and member of Zelena Akcija (Green Action), Croatia

Perspective: Raymond van Ermen, Executive Director, European Partners for the Environment and former EEB Secretary General

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

**10.40 – 11.20: Building alliances**

Perspective: Monique Goyens, Director General, BEUC – the European Consumer Organization

Perspective: Heather Roy, President, Social Platform

Perspective: Seamus Jeffreson, Director, CONCORD

**11.20 – 11.40: Coffee break**

**11.40 – 12.15: Reaching out to the wider public**

Perspective: Joanna Sullivan, EEB Deputy Secretary General and Director of Communications

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

**12.15 – 12.50: Getting through to decision makers**

Perspective: Christian Hey, Secretary General, German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU)

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

**12.50 – 13.00: Closing remarks and close of conference**

Angelo Caserta, Regional Director, BirdLife Europe, Chair of the Green 10

Mikael Karlsson, EEB President



# 3. Proceedings

MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2014

## Opening session

- Message of welcome and introduction to the programme by Mikael Karlsson, EEB President
- Keynote speech by Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

*“The EU’s environmental footprint is too large.”*



*“An improvement of only 1% in resource efficiency in Europe can create 100 - 200,000 jobs.” EEB President Mikael Karlsson*

**EEB President Mikael Karlsson** opened the conference by stressing the need for stepping up efforts to protect the environment on various fronts, such as by halting the erosion of biodiversity and reducing the exposure of people to dangerous chemicals. The EU’s environmental footprint is too large. It has too large an impact on the rest of the globe, through its resource extraction and through its carbon footprint. The EU needs to change this and become the global leader when it comes to environmental protection.

Mr Karlsson has been part of the European Resource Efficiency Platform which worked to improve the state of the environment, public health,

the economy and the EU’s competitiveness. **An improvement of only 1% in resource efficiency in Europe can create 100 - 200,000 jobs.**

However, Mr Karlsson added, the winds of change are blowing in Brussels. ‘Better regulation’ threatens to weaken environmental protection, improvements to air quality and resource efficiency initiatives. The voices in favour of moving to a circular and less polluting, modern economy must now be heard. Mr Karlsson closed by saying that with this conference, the EEB wanted to push the EU in a more progressive and environmentally positive direction.

*“The EEB is 40 years wise. And 40 years young.”*

*Commissioner Karmenu Vella*

**Karmenu Vella**, the EU Commissioner for the Environment, opened his keynote speech by congratulating the EEB on its 40th Anniversary. The EEB is 40 years wise. And 40 years young. As an organisation, it provides constructive criticism and represents the interests of citizens. For this, the Commissioner thanked the EEB.

The EU’s vision for the future is described in the 7th Environmental Action Programme (7th EAP). It provides the direction for how to become a sustainable economy. The Commissioner stressed that implementing the 7th EAP was his priority and, over the coming months, he would focus on how to achieve the objectives it sets out.

The EU has to become a resource-efficient society. To achieve that, our level of consumption has to be addressed. Time is running out. We cannot end up in a scenario where, in forty years time, we have failed our children and their children. The EU has to aim high and act fast. President Juncker has stated that he wants a triple AAA rating for Europe’s economy. Commissioner Vella added that we should also aim to have a triple AAA rating for the environment. We cannot compromise our environment. The Commissioner ended by making a plea to the audience that we all work together. He stressed that **the new Commission has no intention to weaken environmental protection.**

[Read Commissioner Vella’s full speech here.](#)



*“...the new Commission has no intention to weaken environmental protection”. Commissioner Karmenu Vella*

## Module 1: Forty years of European environmental policy: successes, failures and lessons learned

*This module explored the successes and failures of the past 40 years of environmental policy from the perspective of civil society and the EU Institutions.*

*Europe has developed an impressive body of environmental policy and law over the past four decades, which has led to improvements or at least mitigated environmental damage in some areas. However, in other areas there has been continuing decline and pressures have continued to increase. Improvements in resource-efficiency have not been sufficient to achieve absolute decoupling of resource use, emissions and waste generation from economic growth. This has raised fundamental doubts about the sustainability of Europe's economic model and its preoccupation with economic growth irrespective of the environmental consequences.*

*While Europe is on course to meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, each new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows the prospects of staying within the internationally-agreed limit of 2 degree C warming slipping away and underlines the need for Europe to substantially increase its efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions.*

*Our excessive and growing use of natural resources has ensured that, despite having some of the world's leading environmental laws, Europe's ecological footprint continues to greatly exceed our fair share in global terms: we would need three planets if everyone in the world lived like the average European.*

**Moderator:** Michael Scoullos, Professor of Environmental Chemistry, Athens University, Chair of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development and former EEB President (1986-1992)

**Presentation:** John Hontelez, Chief Advocacy Officer at Forest Stewardship Council and former EEB Secretary General (1996-2011)

**Panel debate:** Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler, Director of EU Coordination on Environment, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria  
Ludwig Krämer, Director of ClientEarth's European Union Aarhus Centre



**Professor Michael Scoullos** opened by stating that the EEB is the best partner for the EU institutions in terms of providing sound environmental evidence and forward-thinking. What now needs to happen at EU level is that we need to see a **better integration of environmental policies in other policy areas.**



**John Hontelez** reminded the audience that the 1st Environmental Action Programme in 1972 focused on prevention and containing environmental damage. One of our objectives now has to be to **introduce fiscal policies in environmental protection.** REACH 2007 shifted the legislative focus from government to business. Since 2007 it has been, at least in principle, up to business to prove that a chemical

*“...we need to see a better integration of environmental policies in other policy areas.” Professor Michael Scoullos*

is safe, rather than for governments to prove that it is not, as was the case before 2007. Now REACH is one of the main policies under attack.

**The disappearance of environmental front-runners is the biggest threat to environmental protection.** These front-runners created the Kyoto Protocol, which failed in the rest of world but was a success for the EU. Since then however, the EU's star has been fading. There are several reasons for this: new member states, nervousness about competitiveness and globalisation. The motto today seems to be 'no word-by-word implementation' of EU law.

The European Parliament has become less reliable as a partner for environmental protection. The priority today is to reduce the burden on business. **Environmental policy creates less than 1% of the administrative burden but has become the easiest target for business to complain about.** There are now more 'political hooligans' in the EU who want more national barriers. There has also been an absence of strong leaders.

[Read John Hontelez's full speech here.](#)



**Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler** reflected on the definitions of success and failure in environmental policy. Is an infringement procedure, for example, a success? Polls show that 50% of people want the EU to do more for the environment. The LIFE programme is a success but it does not have the financial means that structural funds enjoy. This should change.

Ms Freytag-Rigler argued that we should not be against economic growth, but 'sustainable development' was surely preferable as a concept to 'sustain-

able growth'. She considered we had thus far failed on delivering sustainable development but argued that EU legislation had been positive, despite the perception that sometimes it had been negative (on LED light bulbs for example).



**Ludwig Krämer** continued by arguing that part of the success of EU legislation is that there are now common rules. He stressed that we need economic growth as well as environmental protection but regretted that the current Commission did not seem to want that.

Mr Krämer argued that the greatest failure has been that governments have not lived up to their statement when they said, in 1972, that economic growth should not be an objective in itself but all governments should aim to reduce disparity and inequality. Another failure is that environment is not a priority for the current Commission and that environment has not been integrated sufficiently into other policy areas. The current Commission has downgraded the environment and there is a risk that proposed new air pollution laws could be withdrawn.

**John Hontelez** argued that the Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment file had been a success and that the alliance between NGOs and progressive industry had been critical in this regard.

**Michael Scoullis** agreed that several environmental proposals have been successful, and the EU is still seen as a pioneer of green policies. Despite its critics, he said, it still leads the world. He asked that NGOs be both critical and constructive of the EU to ensure we protect the environment.

*“The disappearance of environmental front-runners is the biggest threat to environmental protection.” John Hontelez*

## Module 2: The next 40 years: placing sustainability at the heart of Europe's policies

*This module addressed the prospects for the environment over the next four decades under various scenarios and, within that broad framework, focused on the EU's priorities for the next five years.*

*It is widely acknowledged that continuing over the next forty years as we have over the past forty is not an option. Already there are indications that three of the nine planetary boundaries – defined by scientists as the thresholds or tipping points beyond which there is a risk of irreversible and abrupt environmental change – have been crossed. We are already outside the safe operating space for humanity. Europe's contribution to this situation, both historical and current, is disproportionately large.*

*Substantial changes in our production and consumption patterns as well as our lifestyles will be needed in order to live within planetary boundaries and thereby provide the poorest societies with the space and opportunity to develop. Stronger environmental policies, apart from being necessary, can create new business and employment opportunities. In fact, if Europe fails to innovate fast enough towards the low carbon resource-efficient economy promised in the Europe 2020 strategy, it will lose out not just environmentally but also economically to other regions.*

*Whereas such considerations should provide the fundamental framework guiding Europe's future development, this is currently not the case. Laws that aim to safeguard the environment and promote sustainability are under attack in the name of removing obstacles to economic growth, irrespective of the long-term detriment to environment, society and economy that will result from continuation of business as usual. Of specific concern is how the new structures and mandate of the Commission will deliver on environmental and sustainability objectives.*

**Moderator:** Mikael Karlsson, EEB President

**Video message:** Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

**Presentation:** Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director, European Environment Agency

**Panel debate:**

Kirsten Brosbøl, Minister for the Environment, Denmark

Francesco La Camera, Director General, Italian Ministry for Environment and Protection of Land and Sea, on behalf of the Italian Presidency of the EU

Maria Krautzberger, President of the German Federal Environment Agency

Kathleen van Brempt MEP, Vice-Chair, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament

Thomas Becker, Chief Executive Officer, European Wind Energy Association

David Baldock, Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy

In his video message, **Achim Steiner** started by acknowledging the immense work and success of the EEB, which he described as a true force for both innovation and progressive thinking and a vehicle for mobilizing public opinion and public engagement. Mr Steiner focused his speech on giving an international perspective on where Europe stands and the need for the EU to rethink its development agenda.

A key question in Mr Steiner's intervention was 'whether the economic transformation that Europe is going through will be characterized more by disruption and default choices or whether we're able to design this transition and transformation in a more

deliberate and incremental way', ultimately with the objective of transforming our economies.

He pointed out that the EU's relationship with Africa is crucial. How Europe defines its relationship and also its rationale and logic for investments in a continent like Africa is of immense importance. Europe has to accompany Africa in its transition.

UNEP wants the EU to look at its role in the world and not only focus on the member states. How the EU is able to relate to the rest of the world is a fundamental principle that has often driven European policy and expectations are high among the international community for the years to come.

[Watch Achim Steiner's video message here.](#)



*“The EEB: a true force for both innovation and progressive thinking.”*

*Achim Steiner*



**Hans Bruyninckx** opened by referring to the 7th EAP which provides guidance on how to become a low carbon society, a green circular economy and how to achieve resilient ecosystems by 2050. It is clear that we have to learn how to live well within the planet's ecological limits.

The old idea was that we would all get rich, start thinking of the environment and then get sustainable. This thinking is flawed: we cannot have 6 billion more people becoming rich, polluting and then becoming sustainable. We have to rethink our systems, not just try to become more efficient or to introduce a few new technologies. **We need resilient ecosystems that can deliver cleaner air, clean water and fewer dangerous chemicals.**

[Download Hans Bruyninckx Powerpoint-presentation here.](#)



**Minister Brosbøl** stressed that **citizens are looking for long-term solutions that improve our quality of life and environmental protection.** Some politicians still think economic growth in the old sense is possible. We need to fully integrate environment into economic policies, promote sustainable green growth, and create a circular economy.

**There is no contradiction between green growth and environmental protection.** Europe needs to deliver more resource efficiency that will create green growth and new jobs. The air and waste packages are ambitious, but they are exactly what we need to make Europe more sustainable.

Minister Brosbøl continued by explaining that her personal priority was chemicals. Europeans are worried about exposure. We need legislation on endocrine disruptors. REACH legislation needs better implementation. The EU needs to be a leader on the environment and sustainability. Our leadership is not assured in the long run. The EEB's role is crucial to push politicians to be ambitious.



**Francesco La Camera** stressed that the attempt to roll back environmental protection at EU level is unhelpful. **The focus should be to change the governance process.** Environment is not sufficiently part of the European Semester process. The European Council had tasked the Commission to find out how to increase resource efficiency by setting a non-binding resource efficiency target. Removing this from the waste package would be very unhelpful. Sustainable development should be at the centre of European decision-making. Environment should be equal to employment or ECOFIN Council discussions. It should not have a lesser status.

*“...citizens are looking for long-term solutions that improve our quality of life and environmental protection.” Minister Brosbøl*



**Maria Krautzberger** recalled that Germany, under Willy Brandt, launched its first environmental programme in 1974 and created the Federal Environment Agency. Germany has been relatively green for a while. Ms Krautzberger confirmed her view that the 7th EAP can create jobs and sustainable growth. The dichotomy of economy or environment is stale today and needs to be removed. It does not help that Commission President Juncker appears to be following this train of thought.

[Read Ms Krautzberger's speaker's notes here.](#)

**Member of the European Parliament Kathleen van Brempt** stressed that it is extremely important that the EEB is present in the EU lobbying process. The EEB's voice will be needed in the coming years. For Ms van Brempt, the biggest priority is climate change.

**There is one positive aspect to Juncker's plan: at least there is a plan.** The Barroso administration did not seem to have one.

One important point for the EEB to bear in mind is that, although the Parliament has more extremists, most MEPs intend to do a lot of work in the coming period and many good things can come out of it.

**Thomas Becker** highlighted the importance of the circular economy and delivering sustainable energy. Energy is still the biggest emitter in our economy and Europe's energy needs are not sustainable - **54% of EU energy is imported.**

**Every European spends €2 a day to import energy. There is nothing sustainable about that.** We have to create an EU energy market – why should there be 28 different energy agencies, 28 different energy administrations? This is an area where the EU deserves to be given more responsibility and EU countries should give up some of their independence.

**David Baldock** reminded the audience that the EU still has a reputation for being a long-term thinker on environmental policy and that it is important it does not lose that lead on the rest of the world. **One misapprehension seems to be that environmental protection inhibits the economy. Yet there is no macro-economic evidence to suggest that. Studies from the IEEP show that there is no correlation.** Another important idea we should try to reject is that smaller and local administrations are sufficient to deliver environmental protection. It just is not the case. We need EU-level action to deliver.

The moderator **Mikael Karlsson** asked the panelists why President Juncker was threatening to remove the air and waste packages. Ms **Van Brempt** replied that President Juncker was listening to regressive voices in some parts of business and in some Member States but that we have to convince him that scrapping them would be a mistake.

**Mr Baldock** suggested that Juncker might be worried about the EU becoming the next Japan and he needs to be seen doing something about it.

**Mr Bruyninckx** added that some solutions for environmental protection are already before our eyes. We need to avoid lock-ins. **We need to tax the use of natural resources, and not just labour. Our entire system needs changing.**

**Minister Brosbøl** ended the session by saying that *Europe needs to look at long-term gains over short-term costs.* The gains are huge compared to the costs.



## Module 3: Elements of a sustainable transition

*This module explored in more detail some of the areas which need to be addressed in the context of an accelerated transition to sustainability. It opened with several short dynamic 'appetiser' presentations in plenary then went into breakout sessions for more in-depth discussions before concluding in a plenary session.*

**PANEL DEBATE:** Will it be enough to step up incremental change or should we be looking for paradigm shift?

**Connie Hedegaard, former EU Commissioner for Climate Action:**

**“Finding a credible response to the threat of irreversible and catastrophic climate change”**

**Simon Upton, Director, Environment Directorate, OECD:**

**“Why business can no longer be as usual”**

**Sunita Narain, Director General, Centre for Science and the Environment, India:**

**“What the rest of the world expects from Europe in the follow-up to Rio+20” (video message)**

**Joachim Spangenberg, Vice-President, Sustainable Europe Research Institute:**

**“The necessity and possibility of reducing our ecological footprint”**

**Moderator:** Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General





**Connie Hedegaard** pointed out that we definitely need a paradigm shift but that incremental change is better than nothing at all. The solutions are to have targets, price externalities and carbon prices. Binding targets are absolutely essential and regulation and standards are also important. **One regulation is better than 28 and that is a winning argument.** We need to name and shame. Politicians need to be positive about the future instead of scaremongering. With politics should come responsibility. Long-term thinking is essential. We have to move away from thinking about short-term materialism and ‘me-me-me’.



**Simon Upton** agreed that incrementalism would not be enough. It is still what we will do but it will not be enough. We need crises for systemic change to happen but, actually, humans are quite good at handling crises. It is clear that the world is betting on technology. But clean-tech finance seems convinced that it is now policy not technology that is the limiting factor.

[Download Simon Upton's Powerpoint-presentation.](#)



In her video message, **Sunita Narain** pointed out that the EU was the environmental leader in the past but that everything the EU has done has been incremental. For example, EURO V passenger car standards solved one problem but created another. This must change. Instead of cleaning up fuel step by step, we should try to reduce car use. We need to leap-frog each incremental step.

[Watch Ms Narain's video message here.](#)



**Mr Spangenberg** stressed that things are not moving fast enough. We are already in a crisis. The total collapse of the ice sheet could be less than two hundred years away but it is possible that it will take place within decades. The tipping point is closer than we think. Paris 2015 is looming. That is the last chance we have. We need a paradigm shift. **It is not about doing things better, it is about doing better things. To build more resilient economies we have to de-fossilise, de-materialise and increase resource efficiency.** We should not base everything on cost-benefit analyses, otherwise we lose values.

[Download Mr Spangenberg's Powerpoint-presentation here.](#)

*“To build more resilient economies we have to de-fossilise, de-materialise and increase resource efficiency.” Joachim Spangenberg*



## Parallel breakout sessions

### A. Economy and environment

*Reconciling tensions between economic interests and environmental ones remains a central challenge in achieving sustainability, even if there is increasing recognition that in the long term the health of the economy and society in general depends on the health of the environment.*

*The current economic model in which GDP is seen as the primary measure of success and the real costs of activities (e.g. in terms of pollution and resource depletion) are partly externalized has increased resource consumption to a point where it often outweighs efficiency gains. Even when relative decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption is achieved, absolute decoupling often remains elusive.*

*The resources issue has brought economic and environmental thinking closer: reduced resource dependency, in particular where resources are imported, makes economic, environmental and indeed political sense – the last highlighted by recent developments in Ukraine which have put the issue of energy security under the spotlight.*

*Concepts such as the green economy and the circular economy can provide a useful rallying point for a new approach but only if they do not simply provide a green fig leaf for a primarily brown economy, neglect the social justice dimension or serve as a cover for protectionism.*

**Moderator:** Pieter de Pous, EEB Policy Director

**Rapporteur:** Kitty van der Heijden, Director for Europe, World Resources Institute

**Speakers:** Józef Niemiec, Deputy General Secretary, European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC)  
Jacqueline Cottrell, Senior Policy Advisor, Green Budget Europe  
Aniol Esteban, Head of Environmental Economics, New Economics Foundation



Moderator **Pieter de Pous** reiterated that economy and environment had been a topic of discussion for many years. The current impression is that we are moving forward and that things can happen both in the field of policy and economy (through investments).

The following questions were raised: What are the prospects of securing a healthy economy based on a healthy environment? How should we approach GDP growth versus our environmental objectives? What is the role of our governments? How can we meet the misconception that environmental policies increase the burden on businesses?

**Józef Niemiec** started his intervention by congratulating the EEB on the 40th Anniversary. ETUC is just one year older. He reminded the audience about the EEB's and ETUC's joint cooperation in the Spring Alliance and the Manifesto II developed in the framework of the 2014 European elections. The Manifesto has a section on how to create high quality jobs and manage the transition to an economy of the future.

Mr Niemiec referred to the Lisbon strategy that promises to give economy, environment, climate change and social progress equal importance. Unfortunately, this promise was not kept. Often the economy is the only thing that gets attention and with the current crisis and austerity there is a lack of progressive investments. This is a political matter. We need strong EU policies and we need more Europe.

The new team at the European Commission does not seem to be sufficiently ambitious. The Annual Growth Survey proposal with three major pillars remains based on an approach of austerity. Investments are empty words that are not translated into ambitious measures. We need to fight together to put pressure on the new European Commission.

**Jacqueline Cottrell**, Senior Policy Advisor at Green Budget Europe, pointed out that while the EEB was celebrating its 40th anniversary, her organisation was less than four weeks old! She stressed the im-

portance of focusing on the health of the environment, the economy and citizens. She raised the issue of how to create a constituency to act on the changes we expect and kick-off a paradigm shift.

Ms Cottrell suggested the need to **generate more visibility and unify people**. Fiscal policies should address how the economy can work with the environment and not at the expense of the environment. The removal of harmful subsidies and the drive to technological and social innovation should be priorities. The technology is there. Now we must focus on social innovation to shift our economies. Creating a regulatory framework is absolutely crucial.

The moderator Mr de Pous raised the issue of national competence for innovative social and fiscal reforms.

In his presentation, **Aniol Esteban**, Head of Environmental Economics at the New Economics Foundation (NEF) explained that changing the economics of the world was the objective of NEF. The current growth strategies are not sustainable. The economic crisis provides us with a context for change. **We need to move from looking at environmental policies as a constraint to a condition for economic progress**. Pricing externalities is part of the current way of thinking and it leads to incremental change but we need a more radical vision of preserving natural goods. Monetization can be seen as enabling resource conservation, but it is not enough. There is a whole range of values that cannot be dealt with in monetary terms.

We should not fall into the trap of only providing economic data that is hard to monetize. We need to rethink this strategy and be aware of the risks of playing the monetary game. The environmental movement should move beyond environment and link up with social justice and equity issues in a stronger and clearer way.

*“We need to move from looking at environmental policies as a constraint to a condition for economic progress.” Aniol Esteban*

## B. Europe in the wider world

*Europe's environmental record in a global context is a mixed one. Its historical and current contribution to global environmental damage is beyond question, as is the need for much more drastic action to reduce its ecological footprint.*

*On the other hand, it has generally had more progressive policies than other developed countries on issues such as climate change, even if this is mainly a reflection of the sorry state of environmental thinking in some other developed countries. Europe's level of influence on international decision-making processes may be expected to decline in the coming decades, as new economic players gain ground.*

*Already in recent years, Europe has at times been marginalized as the emerging economies have flexed their muscles and made alliances of convenience with other developed economies with less progressive policies (most spectacularly at the Copenhagen climate conference in 2009 but also to some extent in Rio in 2012).*

*But Europe remains a big player and for the time being its actions and policies can make a real difference – not least in the area of development policy, where the traditional 'aid and trade' approach has severe limitations. The negotiations in 2015 towards a set of sustainable development goals and a new climate agreement will both test the extent to which Europe is a credible advocate for global justice and sustainability.*

**Moderator:** Leida Rijnhout, Director, Global Policies and Sustainability Unit, EEB

**Rapporteur:** Déirdre de Búrca, Director, Advocacy & Justice for Children, World Vision EU

**Speakers:** Hans Stielstra, Deputy Head of Unit, Global Sustainability, Trade and Multilateral Agreements, European Commission  
Bernd Nilles, Secretary General, CIDSE  
Charlotte Christiaens, Coordinator, CATAPA



**Leida Rijnhout** opened the session by saying that the workshop would focus on the EU's broader policies and their impact on the Global South. Europe is not a green island and we need to look at how it impacts the rest of the world. Europe is not doing a good job to date - take for example our European lifestyles - we are living on the account of the global south. There is a trend of increasing number of environmental conflicts in the South, often involving people defending their livelihoods. Every week approximately three environmental activists are killed.

Ms Rijnhout suggested that the breakout session could explore: the factors "blocking" sustainable development in the South and the factors that could be used to "leverage" sustainable development there? **The issue of policy coherence and the SDGs are important and should be the basis for a global paradigm shift.**

**Hans Stielstra** pointed out that the issue was being presented as a **"step by step" change versus transformative change** but that it does not have to be this way. Rio+20 was about incremental change. It took small steps that helped us get to the SDGs which can be seen as a big outcome. If realised properly these will be the next "Big Things".

The MDGs focused 90% on development issues. The SDGs integrate the three pillars of sustainable development. Step by step changes need to move us in the right direction. But we need to know what our final vision is.

In June 2014, the EU prepared its Communication on Post 2015. The Open Working Group (OWG) report was finalised in July with 17 goal areas proposed and 169 targets. **The question is how to implement them? What are the means for implementation and how to monitor implementation, review and ensure accountability?**

The European Commission wants to go beyond Official Development Assistance (ODA) and beyond public and private sources of finance. It wants to look at regulatory changes that are considered essential. The Report of the Experts on Sustainable Development Financing and the Council Conclusions in May give us a mandate to do so. Which strategies and policies should we pursue?

We need to cover a wide variety of areas - Trade (TTIP), Environment, Development, Agriculture and Health. The concept of integration of environment into other policy areas is also very important. In relation to development we need to focus on Policy Coherence - coherence between what we do in one policy area and another. The EU 2020 strategy

was an attempt to bind several policy areas together. The EU also had a Sustainable Development Strategy. Maybe we need one over-arching policy agenda for the entire EU instead of two.

How can the SDGs make a difference? **We need success measurement criteria:** we need to continue to push hard for universality meaning that everyone is involved in setting goals and implementing them, ensure balance between the three goals of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental. National ownership is also important - countries that sign up must own the agenda and not feel that it has been imposed upon them by others. We must try to maintain the richness of the SDG goals and targets - resource efficiency is one example - how can we make it operational?

The means of implementation need to go beyond ODA and financing to involve policies and instruments. The implementation of goals and targets must involve the private sector and civil society organisations. A proper monitoring, review and accountability system should be put in place and transparency applied.

**Bernd Nilles**, Secretary General of CIDSE, started his presentation with a brief introduction to CIDSE, which represents 17 Catholic agencies in the EU, US & Canada. They all work with local communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America on Development issues (now Sustainable Development). These agencies try to bring together the voices of the poor communities and translate their concerns into policy proposals to the EU and the UN. The CIDSE network has adopted several strategies and tries to look at systemic failures in our system.

There is a strong conviction that money transfers and policy shifts will not work. Instead there is a need for fundamental transition to something new that will address the systemic failures. In order to create systemic change **we need "new alliances"** - for example, environmental and development NGOs coming together. This is what has led to the SDGs and what created pressure on governments to talk to environmental and development NGOs together.

There is a **need for a new vision** - Europe is too economic and business-driven in its focus. It should revisit its principles and values as suggested recently by the Pope Francis. This debate is very important for the "lifestyle" question. What is important in your life? What counts? We need to look at the environmental impact. How to lower our consumption and reduce our footprint?

Beyond 2015 is an example of hundreds of NGOs coming together from all over the world to advocate to the EU and the UN goals that are universal - that are relevant to people in EU, in Nairobi and in Rio. These goals bring together people from the North and South, not in separate categories.

We all have a vested interest in addressing the systemic failures behind our problems. Europe needs to prioritise equity, the human rights based approach, address inequality, re-orient its economy and introduce participatory approaches. **The agreement on SDGs will only be the beginning. Not the end. The SDGs have a visionary approach. We must all engage.**

**Charlotte Christiaens**, Coordinator of CATAPA took over and introduced the Belgian NGO which is working in Latin America supporting local communities in the fight against open pit mining. Europe needs raw materials but we are selfish in the way that we get them. We do not look at where they come from or how local people suffer.

Blood samples have shown poisoning and local water sources are contaminated because of mining in the neighbourhood. Pit mines are usually huge and birds, cattle, flora and fauna suffer from the contamination. Access to clean water is a big challenge, particularly for people in the South living close to open mines. They have acid rains and there is not enough water left for agriculture.

Protest marches that are organised and peaceful, often turn violent because of police or military interventions. More than 30 people were killed in 2009 by Peruvian police without any subsequent prosecution. There are several Free Trade Agreements in place between Peru and Europe so we could make

a difference in preventing this. We in Europe have the power.

A lot of new gold-mining projects are planned in the future. If all pits start operating it will not be possible to live in the cities nearby due to arsenic and lead exposure for local people. There are currently several protests in Peru.

Mining is not just an issue in Peru, but also in Europe. New gold mines are planned in Romania and Spain. They do not bring development to these countries but create contamination (cyanide and mercury spills) and force people from their homes.

In Skouries in Greece some very valuable forest has already been removed to prepare the top of the mountain for gold mining. The ratio product/non-product is about 6% (product) to 94% (waste). This cannot be called efficient.

Projects must operate in a responsible and respectful way. Several steps can be taken such as lining lakes, controlling the extraction, making sure that there is no contact with air or ground water. Several other measures must also be introduced: abolishing soft laws and introducing hard laws to regulate companies under national jurisdiction for activities in and outside the country, prohibiting irresponsible investments by the EU, banning cyanide use in the processes, restricting free trade agreements, and moving towards alternatives such as circular economy and responsible mining. It is important to have a 3rd party international independent monitoring system for mining activities.

[Download Charlotte Christiaens' Powerpoint-presentation here.](#)

#### **Some final remarks by Leida Rijnhout:**

1. A sense of urgency is necessary – start acting on sustainable consumption and production.
2. Local communities in the South are “losing the battle” – we should stop that from happening.
3. Coherence of EU policies is not good enough – we need to focus on issues related to trade.
4. Universal means implemented both in Europe and the South and staying within planetary boundaries.
5. We need a legal framework to make business accountable.
6. We need quotas to cap resource use.

## C. Democracy, accountability and the rule of law

*Many of today's environmental problems have their roots in our systems of governance. Lack of transparency, participation and accountability remain major problems, pointing to the need for better implementation of the Aarhus Convention.*

*The status of law within society is also an important indicator – not just whether laws are applied and respected, important as that is, but the extent to which laws exist in relation to matters that have broad societal implications. In an increasingly globalised world, international law becomes more important as a counterbalance to the power of irresponsible multinationals which can otherwise gravitate to jurisdictions providing the weakest protections of the environment, human health, consumer and worker rights, etc.*

*Pressures for deregulation have increased on the back of the economic crisis, with certain business interests finding common cause with Eurosceptics in resenting the interference of 'Brussels'. Such pressures have found their expression through the likes of the Commission's High Level Group on Administrative Burdens (Stoiber Group) and the REFIT programme, and have clearly shaped the set-up of the new Commission. In addition to that, the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) may provide a new channel for a deregulatory crusade.*

*At the same time, new ideas to strengthen the international legal framework have emerged, such as the ecocide concept, which would make the destruction of ecosystems a crime in its own right.*

**Moderator:** Liz Hiester, ClientEarth, EEB Vice-President

**Rapporteur:** Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe

**Speakers:** Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director of Implementation, Governance and Semester, DG Environment, European Commission  
Gita Parihar, Head of Legal, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland  
Prisca Merz, Initiator, End Ecocide in Europe

Liz Hiester opened the session by asking the speakers to answer the following three questions:

**What are the main threats to achieving a more transparent, democratic and accountable European Union that truly serves the interests of its citizens?**

**What are the main opportunities for making progress in that direction? Do we need new types of instruments?**

**How healthy is the rule of law in the EU?**

To ensure focus to the discussions, the questions should be addressed in the context of environmental concerns.



The first speaker, **Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea**, explained his role as being in charge of implementation, governance, coherence and the European Semester, using three legal instruments: infringements, cohesion instruments and policy tools. Regarding the Semester, some country specific recommendations are environmental.

Mr Ciobanu-Dordea pointed out that we have to acknowledge that in terms of transparency and rule of law in the area of environmental protection, Europe has made significant progress. In the last 30-40 years, a large body of rules has been adopted and they are, to a large extent, implemented.

The Court of Justice of the EU has also clarified many aspects in its case law. We now have a largely good range of legal instruments. Today we see that the economic crisis has become a political crisis. In this political context: what are the opportunities we have when it comes to facing such threats? We face deep challenges, about the way we live, based on consumerism. Mr Ciobanu-Dordea listed the following opportunities:

1. We have passed beyond the point of no return in terms of democracy, transparency and public participation in environmental decision making. Fundamental progress has been made. The legislation is there for people and communities to use. We need to make sure that these tools continue to be used. We have a Court of Justice that is aware of the solid meaning of the rules and the underlying philosophy that these rules are based on.
2. We have technological transformation, digitalization, big data, open source and other tools at hand. They need to be put to work for the purposes of environmental protection, as for other purposes.
3. Better regulation is perceived as a challenge, but can be turned into an opportunity: to improve things, or to demonstrate with facts and figures that rules are adequate. REFIT is not about deregulation but about better regulation. There are inconsistencies that we need to tackle. We have to look at the coherence of rules adopted in different periods as well. See for instance the mission letter from President Juncker to Commissioner Vella: it does not say that he has to come up with a proposal to amend all his tools, but it calls for evaluations.

Of course we are still concerned about the lack of a legal tool for access to justice at EU level, but 90% of the legal framework is there. The big challenge is the implementation gap. This is what needs to be addressed, instead of a permanent “fuite en avant”

(rush forward).

**Gita Parihar** continued by referring to the Aarhus Convention. The EU is a signatory to the Aarhus Convention, which gives members of the public and NGOs rights to information, participation and access to justice. It also has a provision requiring countries to promote the application of the Aarhus principles at the international level. The Aarhus Convention is applied to the EU institutions through the Aarhus Regulation (Regulation 1367/2006).

However, the Aarhus Regulation has a narrower form of wording than the Convention wording so grants a limited version of Aarhus rights: for example, you can only review decisions that have an individual scope, that are legally binding, that have external effects. Fortunately, the EU General Court ruled that the Regulation did not fit with the spirit of the Aarhus Convention. However, the European Commission, Council and Parliament are appealing this ruling. There are two issues:

- How should the Regulation be interpreted?
- If the Regulation does not give you the full rights it should give you under the Convention, can you challenge that?

Ms Parihar stressed that it is very hard to get a case into court. There are also problems with access to information, the Access to Documents regulation (Regulation 1049/2001) does not comply with the Aarhus Convention. The Aarhus Regulation is supposed to modify the application of the Access to Documents regulation when it comes to environmental matters, which means that you have to look at the two regulations and understand how they interact with each other to know what your rights are. Again, there are extra qualifications in the Aarhus Regulation that do not exist in and are not allowed under the Convention. The Aarhus Regulation states that access to documents “shall” be refused if the exceptions contained in it apply, whereas the Aarhus regulation states that they “may” apply. There are exceptions relating to financial, monetary and economic policies and audits that do not exist in the Convention. There are often delays in the responses by the Commission to information requests.

There is also a question of attitudes to challenge. In Ms Parihar’s experience, public authorities in the UK are much more comfortable with being challenged than the European Commission and this can create a reluctance to challenge for fear of damaging relationships. Added to the procedural hurdles, this makes life quite difficult if you want to bring forward a challenge.

This is a serious problem as it is important to have checks on the legal validity of decisions taken by public bodies and at present NGOs cannot do this as all the cases are about whether we can bring cases forward rather than the legal basis of the decisions themselves.

The proposed REFIT of the Habitat and Bird Directives is deeply worrying. These directives are the last line of defense for biodiversity and wildlife that are now under threat. In the UK, three out of every five species are in long-term decline. Commission President Juncker also wants to review the air and circular economy packages, which is worrying. **The EU used to be an environmental champion but at the moment we are retreating.**

**Prisca Merz**, Initiator of End Ecocide in Europe then took the floor. She reminded the participants that the topic of the session was **accountability** and that this is **at the heart of the law on ecocide prevention**. Those responsible for extensive damage of the natural environment included **leaders of corporate businesses, governments and financial institutions**.

Ecocide was first coined as a term in the 1950s and during the 1980s and 1990s it became part of the discussion on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. An early draft included article 26 “An individual who wilfully causes or orders the causing of widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment shall, on conviction thereof, be sentenced...”. In 1995 this was removed from the draft based on a seemingly unilateral decision by the chairman, notwithstanding protests by many countries. A few years ago the British lawyer Polly Higgins re-introduced the concept. She defines ecocide as the “**extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of ecosystem(s)** of a given territory to such an extent that the peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been or will be severely diminished”.

In 2012, Ms Merz helped set up a **European Citizens Initiative** on the issue. While the initiative did not get the 1 million signatures needed, the concept is now better known and the work continues thanks to the **more than 170,000 signatures** that were collected. The work on the initiative was done without funding, without an organisational

structure, and without much experience. Ms Merz and her colleagues believe that if you are not happy with the status quo you have to act and **propose alternative solutions rather than complain**.

In Nigeria, Ecuador, and Brazil, the damage caused by Western companies to land, air, water and human health is unacceptable, she maintained. However, ecocide is also taking place inside Europe. Examples include the Rosia Montana mining project in Romania, the gold mines in Bulgaria and Greece, oil exploration threats in the Canary Islands, nickel and uranium mining in Finland, fracking in the UK and elsewhere.

On the global level, ecocide should be recognised as a crime under the amended Rome Statute and all signatory states should fully implement it. On the European level there should be an Ecocide Directive. These legal tools will help communities to defend their right to a health environment – not only for the sake of humans, but for the sake of the ecosystem itself.

The law of ecocide prevention would ensure that **those who take the decision to destroy a certain piece of land are ultimately held responsible for that destruction and its consequences for human and all life**. At present, we are suffering from an immense crisis. The only thing that can save us now is a paradigm shift. Changing our laws to make ecocide a crime will also help people **regain trust in our democratic systems**, by putting forward **clear rules for decision-makers**.

Europe is in a crisis. The base for the Chinese word for crisis and opportunity is the same. Let’s take this as an opportunity to implement forward-looking legislation to protect the climate, human rights, and improve social justice.

If Europe wants to maintain its status in the world, it needs to contribute to shaping the society for the 21st century with innovative ideas and forward-looking solutions that move beyond industrialisation and fossil fuels. **History shows that such paradigm shifts can be achieved**. We abolished the feudal system and got citizens’ rights. We outlawed slavery and recognised genocide as a crime. **The time has come to make ecocide a crime**.

*“The time has come to make ecocide a crime.” Prisca Merz*

## D. The climate crisis

*As the scientific consensus around the reality of climate change strengthens with each new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the time remaining to act in order to prevent irreversible and potentially catastrophic effects is running out, leading some scientists to predict a temperature increase of 4°C by the end of the century without additional measures to tackle emissions.*

*The fact that 60-80% of known fossil fuel reserves will need to stay in the ground if we are to stay within the 2°C limit should stimulate major investment in energy efficiency and renewables, but as long as there is money to be made from fossil fuels in the short term, such investment will only be made to a sufficient degree if the market receives the right political signals. Meanwhile, shale gas has been trumpeted by some as a transition fuel, despite concerns not only about fugitive methane emissions and other environmental effects but also its economic viability.*

*Europe's 2030 climate and energy policy as well as a new global agreement to be adopted in Paris in late 2015 should provide the trigger for the needed transition, but lessons need to be learned from the experience in Copenhagen in 2009.*

**Moderator:** Ulf Björnholm Ottosson, Head of Office, Brussels Liaison Office to the EU Institutions, Regional Office for Europe, United Nations Environment Programme

**Rapporteur:** Tom Burke, Founding Director and Chairman, E3G

**Speakers:** Monica Frassoni, President, European Alliance to Save Energy  
Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes, Vice-President of the European Renewable Energies Federation  
Mark Johnston, Senior Adviser on energy, environment and climate change at the European Policy Centre

The debate focused on the following key topics:

**Expectations for the UN climate change negotiations in Paris in 2015;**

**The EU's current role in the global fight against climate change, and whether the EU is truly 'a leader';**

**Messaging and narrative of the environmental movement to legitimize what we are asking for;**

**Mobilization of people and building of momentum for change.**



Regarding the 2015 Conference of Parties (COP) of the international climate negotiations in Paris, the participants of the breakout session did not have high expectations. Gone are the days when a COP could create a 'hype' similar to the one before the 2009 summit in Copenhagen. Even if the speakers of the session were not expecting Paris to deliver a paradigm shift, the case for climate action was perceived as much clearer than before.

The science and the consequences of climate change are not as hotly disputed as before, it is generally accepted as fact. Technological challenges and development of renewable energy sources have come a long way since Copenhagen and are no longer perceived as obstacles.

Debate is more focused on how to reach the 2 degrees target, the obligation, than on whether to reach it. As a consequence, it is no longer enough to ask policy makers and leaders for 'Climate Action' in general. At this stage more specific messages are needed. Neither is it enough to ask for action right before the Paris COP. Opinions and arguments need to be shaped well in advance since political decisions will be taken long before the meeting in Paris.

The speakers also pointed out that the Paris COP would not only be about the agenda but the wider framework. The current economic crisis offers a window of opportunity to promote climate change mitigation and the Paris COP must be seen as a part of that opportunity.

The role of the EU in setting and leading the international climate agenda was not ranked very highly. On the contrary, the EU was perceived as having lost its role as a world leader on climate action. This was deemed to be linked to the EU's inability

to convince its citizens to regain trust in EU. On a more specific note, it was highlighted that the EU's credibility and role will depend on its ability to first deliver the 2020 climate and energy targets, then to translate the Council Conclusions of November 2014 on the 2030 targets into effective legislation, on its ability to create sufficient majorities in all the three EU institutions and also to focus on climate policies beyond the ETS.

The messaging and narrative of the environmental movement on the urgency of climate change mitigation created a big debate among the participants of the group. Several speakers highlighted that NGOs have usually been very good at formulating policy asks and recommendations but less successful in formulating and understanding the politics of how to get those recommendations adopted. Politics and politicians should be targeted more directly.

To build a more effective narrative, the need to link climate policies to other policy areas was once again highlighted. It was suggested that the voice of the 'climate change takers' – those industries suffering from and feeling the impacts of climate change, should be strengthened in response to the voice of the 'climate change makers' - those industries mostly responsible for today's emissions. Climate change makers tend to dominate discussions.

In addition to targeting politicians, participants emphasized the goal to mobilise civil society and appeal to the general public. Arguments were made both for and against highlighting the risks and threats of climate change as a way to mobilize people. Linking climate change with health, food and other topics closer to the everyday lives of people was seen as important.

### **The Rapporteur of the Breakout Group, Tom Burke, summarized the discussion:**

- Expectations on Paris seem to be mixed: encouragement and progress on the one hand and the expectation of disappointments on the other.
- The need to link the climate debate with other major societal debates was raised several times in different contexts in the discussion and clearly needs to be done better.
- The lack of urgency in the climate debate is causing frustration within the environmental community and risks creating internal tensions. Tensions between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches seemed particularly apparent, but it also seems highly likely that both approaches are needed.
- A clear narrative from the environmental community to justify and legitimize what we are asking for still seems to be missing. The narrative of the opposition could be summarized as: mitigation costs too much and is not worth the sacrifice. A counter narrative is needed.

## E. The threat to nature

*In its Biodiversity Strategy the EU has set itself the goal of preventing and, where feasible, restoring the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems by 2020. Some attempts to come closer to this goal, such as the proposal for a soil directive or plans for an instrument on environmental inspections, have faced strong opposition from vested interests, whereas others are unlikely to achieve their original purpose, such as the recently reformed Common Agricultural Policy.*

*On the positive side, the adoption of a new regulation to tackle invasive species constitutes a major step forward in tackling a well-known driver of biodiversity loss, which costs the EU between 9-12 billion EUR a year to control. The Commission is preparing another new initiative that should seek to achieve 'no net loss' of biodiversity. A critical question that needs to be addressed as part of this initiative is whether it will set out new proposals that will tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss or have a more limited scope that would promote biodiversity offsetting mechanism in the wider country side.*

*Thanks to the reformed Common Fisheries Policy, the outlook for marine biodiversity has improved, though new threats are on the horizon linked to 'blue growth' initiatives and important reviews of legislation tackling illegal fishing.*

**Moderator:** Luc Bas, Director of EU Representative Office, IUCN

**Rapporteur:** Ariel Brunner, Policy Director, BirdLife Europe

**Speakers:** Francois Wakenhut, Head of Unit for Biodiversity, Natural Capital Directorate, DG Environment, European Commission  
Monica Verbeek, Executive Director, Seas at Risk  
Hannah Mowat, Forests and Climate Campaigner, FERN



Moderator **Luc Bas** opened the breakout session by pointing out that nature is a pillar on which everything else rests and that it is difficult to treat it as a separate session. He referred to the European Red List, a review of the conservation status of approximately 6,000 European species. Some 24% of the animal species listed are threatened with extinction. How can we avoid that ecosystems end up on the Red List? We need to make good and clear assessments on the status of ecosystems. Mr Bas asked the question 'Should we worry about the review of the birds and habitats directives or are they solid enough to stand the test?'

**Hannah Mowat** from FERN continued by listing three threats:

1. Habitat fragmentation: the direct threats caused by the way we build roads, house ourselves and warm ourselves.
2. Topical threat: the threat of the political discourse. Environmental legislation is depicted as an obstacle to economic growth. In 99.5% of cases checked in the UK there was no threat to business from EU environmental legislation. The real threat is the perception of the threat, which is much higher.
3. Birds and Habitats Directives: Yes, the directives are solid but we should worry about the proposed 'fitness check' because of the political context.

There is always a risk of misplaced solutions. An example of a 'false solution' is REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) where we put ourselves in the situation: we either want to keep forest standing or reduce emissions. We are again placing the problem on others. FERN wants to see a paradigm shift.

**Monica Verbeek** from Seas at Risk continued with a presentation on the threat to the blue world and European seas. The European Environment Agency report includes several sobering facts. The way we are currently using our seas risks degrading several ecosystems irreversibly. Some positive legislation exists, such as the new Common Fisheries Policy, which has the strong objective to restore fish levels to abundant levels. The 2008 Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was also important; it had as a goal to get seas to good environmental status. These pieces of legislation will only work if implemented.

In recent negotiations, scientific advice was not taken into account and the quotas were set above the levels recommended by scientists. Earlier this year, the EC reviewed the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Unfortuna-

tely it showed that Member States are limited in their ambitions, setting weak and unmeasurable targets. A strong joint vision from policy-makers for the oceans is needed.

As regards the ongoing debate on blue growth, focussed on how to harness the untapped potential of Europe's oceans, seas and coasts for jobs and growth, there are plenty of sectors where little is known about the impacts, such as fisheries, offshore oil and gas, mining and aquaculture. There is a risk of increasing environmental pressure.

The trend is to go further into the deep and further offshore, all based on the assumption that the demand for resources and energy will continue to grow. There are limits to blue growth and we need to question the whole growth paradigm. Do consumers really want more seafood? The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations suggests that 30% of food is wasted.

We are now looking at going very deep into the sea for manganese and copper to supply electronics, for example. We are told that we have the technology and the European Commission tells us that there is no way to stop this development, so we need to find ways to make it sustainable. We need to improve product efficiency and lifetimes. We need a 'sufficiency agenda'.

[Download Monica Verbeek's Powerpoint-presentation here.](#)

Ms Verbeek's intervention was followed by a presentation by **François Wakenhut**, Head of Unit for Biodiversity, Natural Capital Directorate, DG Environment at the European Commission.

Mr Wakenhut listed several issues and threats. The diagnosis is dire. There is no excuse to say that we did not know about the threat to ourselves. The evidence that has been accumulating for the last decade about the links between ecosystems and human society is no longer possible to ignore. We are responsible for the preconditions of our socio-economic wellbeing in the years to come and this is something we should use more forcefully as an argument in the debates ahead.

We should also remind ourselves that biodiversity has very strong support from citizens for action at EU level (97% support). This is a huge strength in terms of defining the agenda. It is not all doom and gloom, we have also achieved a lot, for instance through Natura 2000. On 1 January 2015 we celebrate the birth of the Regulation on Invasive Alien Species at EU level. These are important contributions to achieving the objectives. We have lost some fights especially on agriculture, because of short

term concerns, such as rapid disbursement of agricultural funds.

The environmental report from the EEA and the state of nature report in April 2015 on where we stand with the implementation of nature legislation both paint a bleak picture. This will be followed by a mid-term review in September 2015 and later the REFIT results.

Nature protection is part of the EU DNA, something that is at the core of the EU project. We recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Habitats Directive. Together with other pieces of legislation we are well equipped to address the challenges, provided we fill the gaps. The work on Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES)

is the direct link of what we have been discussing in terms of paradigm shift. We need to reflect the value of nature in national accounting systems to be in a position to take the right decisions in the future.

**Ariel Brunner from BirdLife** added some remarks. A big challenge in making progress is to make nature conservation look important, which is shocking because the idea that life on Earth is a detail is quite crazy if you take a couple of minutes to think about it. It seems like President Juncker still has not taken that time. Mr Brunner asked if we should not make nature conservation the number one priority since everything else is built on having a functional ecosystem. Even within the environment community, nature is seen as a niche.



## F. The threat to health

*Following the adoption of the 7th EAP the EU set itself ambitious targets to improve environmental health, in particular in the area of air quality and to achieve a toxic free environment. On the other hand, efforts to improve chemical safety are facing a strong push back from industry: implementation of REACH is happening at too slow a pace and key issues such as endocrine disrupting chemicals, cocktail effects and toxicity of nanomaterials remain unresolved.*

*This points to a larger trend where new technologies, that often come along with inherent new risks, are developed and brought to the market place at a continuously growing speed, whereas at the same time the speed at which regulators put in place effective new measures to assess, manage and minimize such risks is slowing down.*

*The Commission's air package, already not a particularly ambitious, is also facing an uphill struggle as it moves through the co-decision process. The use of the precautionary principle, despite being enshrined in EU treaty and providing a common sense approach to deal with scientific uncertainty, continues to be challenged at every occasion, most recently during negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the US.*

**Moderator:** Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance

**Rapporteur:** Génon K. Jensen, Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

### Speakers:

Axel Singhofen, Adviser on Health and Environment Policy for the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament

Michael Warhurst, Executive Director, CHEM Trust

Christer Ågren, Director, Air Pollution and Climate Secretariat (AirClim)



The moderator **Nina Renshaw** introduced the panel and highlighted the threats of the new European Commission whose main focus is economic growth. Health, together with the precautionary principle and prevention, has lost importance in the Environment Commissioner's portfolio.

**Michael Warhurst's** presentation entitled "pollution, from inaction to action?" was based on three topics: environment, sustainability and science. Mr Warhurst pointed out that environment should be a broad concept, but that it has been narrowed down to climate, and more recently resource efficiency. He called on civil society to work on getting pollution (chemicals and air pollution) back on the environmental agenda. Minimizing pollution must be part of the green economy agenda.

An example of how European scientific bodies disregard the broad wellbeing of society is the authorisation process of the substance DEHP under the REACH regulation. The approach of the European Chemicals Agency's socio-economic analysis committee appears to be to grant authorisations whenever a company claims that they will have to shut down if they can no longer manufacture a substance of very high concern (such as DEHP). This does not take into account the fact that other companies would benefit from producing safer alternatives, which are more likely to have a growing market.

Science is a crucial tool but it is very often abused, in particular where there is uncertainty. Regulators must consider both what is and what is not known (and what may not be possible to test). The strategy of generating doubt, well known from tobacco and climate debates, is now used by the chemicals industry as a very successful strategy.

Mr Warhurst encouraged civil society organisations to involve active scientists to make the scientific case for stronger environmental policy, as with climate policy.

[Download Mr Warhurst's Powerpoint-presentation](#)

**Christer Ågren** gave a presentation on air quality and health. There has been a dramatic reduction of emissions since 1990, between 28% and 84%, depending on the type of pollutant. However, emissions from shipping have increased. Furthermore, regarding the EU urban population the EEA estimates that more than 90% were exposed to excess air pollution (PM2.5 and O3) in 2010-2012. Based on monitoring data, these two pollutants caused 447,000 premature deaths in EU in 2011.

According to the EU's last three Environment Action Programmes (1993, 2002, 2013), the EU's long-term objective for air pollution is "to achieve levels of air quality that do not give rise to significant negative impacts on, and risks to, human health and the environment."

Regarding air quality and health, in 2010, excessive levels of PM2.5 and O3 were estimated to cause over 400,000 premature deaths per year in the EU-28. Under current legislation air pollution would still cause more than 320,000 premature deaths per year by 2030. There is a need to do much more in this field given the important adverse effects of air pollution.

Achieving the proposed NEC (National Emission Ceilings) Directive emission targets for 2030 is estimated to cost €3.3 billion per year in 2030, while the estimated health benefits would be €39-139 billion per year. **Costs are often overestimated while benefits are underestimated.** The EU's 40% climate target for 2030 will cut NEC compliance costs significantly and substantially reduce damage, but the long-term objectives are still far from achieved.

Mr Ågren highlighted that climate, energy and transport policies have great impact on air emissions. Faster and more far-reaching domestic emission reductions are needed in the EU.

[Download Mr Ågren's Powerpoint-presentation here.](#)

**Axel Singhofen** pointed out that the REACH regulation looks good on paper, but that the reality is somewhat different. How much protection we actually get out of REACH is a challenging question.

Registration of chemical substances manufactured, used and imported by companies is the backbone of REACH. However, the European Chemicals Agency, after checking compliance of 5% of the registration dossiers of the first registration deadline, found that 69% of the dossiers were not in compliance. This shows that there is a serious lack of enforcement by authorities. Regarding the evaluation process, there are also fewer evaluations than originally foreseen.

Authorisation should be the main driver of substitution of substances of very high concern (SVHC). However, progress is very slow. And when it finally started to bite on the first SVHC in 2014, industry, which was always opposed to authorisation, lobbied hard and succeeded in weakening the process. He pointed out that there are hardly any new res-

trictions being put forward. In fact, the failed chemicals policy of the 90's delivered more restrictions than REACH.

Mr Singhofen also called attention to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) that aimed to stop discharges, emissions and loss of priority hazardous substances, yet the Commission decided unilaterally not to make any such proposals under the WFD. At the same time, Member States succeeded in delaying the application of quality standards for new priority substances by 6 years.

He referred to the failure to address the manifold problems linked to high-density livestock farming, which inter alia relies on the systematic use of antibiotics. He also referred to the ongoing massive political fight over endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs). In 2009, on the insistence of the European Parliament, the Commission was mandated to develop proper criteria for the identification of EDCs. However, due to heavy lobbying by the pesticide industry, the scientific question of what is an EDC has been entirely politicized. The Commission now intends to make its decision dependent on an Impact Assessment (IA) that looks at the impact that different definitions would have on the pesticide industry.

As if things were not bad enough in the old Commission, the new one seems determined to slash key proposals related to health and the environment (air and waste packages). We are in a situation of rollback in the name of «better regulation». The new Commission wants to be «small on small things, and big on big things», and it is clear that protection of health and the environment are not «big» for them.

The priorities for civil society organisations should be full implementation of the 7th EAP goals, many of which are linked to the protection of human health. It is important that health organisations join this battle, and do not leave it to environmental NGOs alone.

**Génon K. Jensen** advised how to get health evidence into decision making. There are some networks on health such as the endocrine society that are providing evidence to the Parliament. Certainly, health organisations are making progress while not-for-profit health insurance and medical associations are becoming more active, especially on air pollution and energy, since coal is costing 43 billion euros on health-related issues.

She emphasized that health is a human right and the importance of localizing health costs per country (not only at European level) in order to give more visibility to the problem and make figures more understandable. E.g. '400,000 premature deaths in EU' is too abstract, but if you say '27,000 people die in London' it becomes a more powerful message.

Another strategy for non profit organisations could be to personalize polluters. Who benefits from the crime? It would be important to differentiate between 'industry' and 'chemical manufacturers'.

Ms Jensen underlined that a paradigm shift entails risks and there is a need for robust risk governance processes. As an example, REACH and WFD (Water Framework Directive) have an intrinsic paradigm shift, such as the shift of the burden of proof. However, paradigms need to be applied properly. For instance, a major challenge is the old paradigm that regulation is bad and that any regulation is in detriment of technology, as currently seen by some in the Commission. The Commission cannot say openly that health and environment is a 'small thing'. She encouraged CSOs to call health and environment a 'big thing'.

Regarding how to take up the economic discussion, she recognised that the economy is really important as there are big costs involved in health systems. Economists and more science are essential and cost/benefit analyses are crucial. Another challenge raised was that it is easier to show the link between health, air quality and climate rather than the health-chemicals relationship.

## Conclusions:

- There is a rollback of environmental protection that needs countering. Health is one of the big issues.
- We need to do better in using the economic arguments.
- The new Commission is falling into paradigms from the pre-sustainability era. CSOs need to continue stressing the problems and suggest solutions.
- The power of the Commission's impact assessment (IA) process should not be underestimated. Currently IAs are clearly biased towards monetization.
- It is key to reframe the threat of pollution and opportunities for prevention. Environmental action can provide a big opportunity for better health.
- There is a need to engage with health costs and benefits to show how people are going to die or suffer if we do not act.
- If the European Parliament were more active in monitoring implementation, this would increase public debate.



## Reports back from breakout sessions and closing remarks

The rapporteurs of the individual breakout sessions reported back to plenary.

### Group A: Economy and Environment

**Rapporteur:** Kitty Van der Heijden, Director for Europe, World Resources Institute.

Reporting back from the debate during her session, Ms Van der Heijden said that in general people tend to treasure what we can measure (we know what's on our bank account) but don't seem to really care about the impact on the planet. The problem with environmental assessments is that they do not always help to reverse the trends or lead us to sustainable solutions. A big part of our economy is focused on taxation. We should start reforming the tax system and tax resource use.

We must mobilize and campaign for change. We need more EU policies and a much stronger Europe than the one we have now. And a fundamental shift in the economic model. We face an unsustainable and unfair model and need to remember that there are no jobs and no happiness on a dead planet. But we should not get it wrong; being careful and working for better sustainability does not mean being anti-growth per se. It is important to discuss the role of solidarity and innovation policies.

### Group B- Europe in the wider World

**Rapporteur:** Deirdre De Burca, Director, advocacy and justice for Children, World Vision EU.

Ms de Burca pointed out that Europe is not an island. Even if it gets 100% green, it cannot ignore its impact on the rest of the world. People in Europe are over-consuming natural resources and there is a strong need to reduce the ecological footprint. The EU wants to go beyond overseas development assistance and introduce regulatory changes. This will have impacts on several sectors such as agriculture and trade. Policy coherence for sustainable development has to be the cornerstone. Concerns had been raised in the group that existing EU policies are not compatible with the sustainable framework goals.

DG ENV responded that this is not a discussion about the millennium goals - it is particularly important that the economy makes a difference. National ownership is important and so are proper monitoring and measurement tools. The speaker from CIDSE said that his organisation was frustrated by the lack of progress. The issue is systematic failure. Fundamental changes are needed. The importance of the new sustainable goals framework was highlighted several times during the debate. This agenda can have an influence over EU policies.

Visionary values are of paramount importance. The EU is currently too economically driven, there is a need for change in consumption patterns. These changes have to be people driven. In the run up to the Summit in Paris in 2015, a beyond 2015 grassroots movement has been set up. It gathers NGOs from the North and the South that share common interests and goals. This is encouraging and is a great example of how people can drive changes.

The representative from CIDSE also talked about the importance of addressing inequalities. Participation and inclusiveness are key. The last speaker (from CATAPA- working with communities from Latin America) said that Europe does not always look at where its raw materials come from. It dismisses their impacts while it can lead to poisoning of local water and development of children's diseases outside of Europe. It can also lead to land grabbing, preventing local communities to use the land they used to manage to make their living.

The representative from CATAPA has very specific demands to restrict free trade agreements. CATAPA is concerned about the sustainable goals for development as they are not legally binding, too soft and will take forever before they are implemented. Governance was another topic that was discussed in the breakout group and the Aarhus convention. Peer review mechanisms were also mentioned as a potential way forward.

### **Group C: Democracy, accountability and the rule of Law**

**Rapporteur:** Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director Friends of the Earth Europe

Ms Stoczkiewicz explained that the participants in the break out group had tried to respond to the question 'How healthy is the current rule of law?' Currently, not all regulations are fully compatible with the Aarhus convention. During the session, worries around deregulation and REFIT were expressed. These were seen as big threats to the rule of law within the EU.

Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea from DG Environment had responded by saying that REFIT is foreseen in the interest of better regulation and not deregulation. Several people in the group had a different idea. Mr Ciobanu-Dordea insisted that it should be approached as an attempt to have better regulation and to check if laws are fit for purpose. The question however that remained in the group was who would do the checking? Ciobanu-Dordea reassured the participants that this would go through the Commission and that no one can change it unilaterally. Despite this and reassurances from DG Environment on REFIT, several questions remained, such as the fear it would become a tool for deregulation rather than better regulation.

There were also discussions about new instruments such as the accountability of crimes against ecosystems. This issue already emerged in the '60s and has been revitalized, including by the End Ecocide campaign. Most participants agreed on the need for an instrument for accountability. The ones taking the decisions have to be held responsible. The 'End Ecocide in Europe' campaign wants recognition of crimes against ecosystems.

### **Group D: the Climate Crisis**

**Rapporteur:** Tom Burke, founding Director and chairman, E3G

The session started by reiterating that the climate crisis is far from solved. Monica Frassoni, the President of the European Alliance to Save Energy indicated the need to look at the climate crisis in relation to other crises - in particular the economic crisis. She highlighted the need to think through our position. There was a lot of frustration in the group about the gap between the urgency of the problem and the weakness of the political response. It was also stressed that only expressing frustration is not enough. The group also discussed the potential impact on the climate change negotiations if the UK were to leave the EU.

There was a call to look beyond 2015: things will not stop at or after this COP. Mr Burke ended by explaining that he was disappointed not to have heard a clear narrative about the need for more action while the opponents have a very clear narrative: it costs too much.

### **Group E- the Threat to Nature**

**Rapporteur:** Ariel Brunner, Policy Director, BirdLife Europe

There was a common understanding that nature is under threat in the group. One of the biggest threats is the political threat with the current discussions about modifying the Habitats Directive, a cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. Mr Brunner expressed concerns about the conference: if you look at how the programme of the conference has been structured, nature seems to be something of an afterthought and this is regrettable. There were strong opinions in the breakout session that we need to reinstate nature/biodiversity in the centre. Without life on Earth, there is indeed no economy and no jobs.

Most people know what needs to be done but the obstacle is to find the will to do it. The example of deep sea mining was used: if people continue wanting to consume more and more, then we would need more resources and continue to go deeper and deeper – then of course you try to do it in a sustainable way but this is exactly where the problem of biodiversity lies. How can we bridge the gap?

The group had a long discussion about values and how to develop narratives around those values. People clearly care about life but how do you link that to the other things they care about (jobs, wages) and how do you then translate it into a political system?

Some participants claimed that you need to talk basics and others said that you need to talk economics - there was a dichotomy there. Mainstreaming can help, it was said – President Juncker is driving a mainstreaming agenda with growth written everywhere - so if you can get sustainability everywhere - then maybe we have solved part of the problem.

There was a call for public mobilization. The need to get the public interested was highlighted and the need to engage with the business community. The rapporteur finally made a personal statement: a lot of people in the business community would not recognize themselves in this war on life, but we need to realize that this is what it is about.

**Group F: The threat to health**

**Rapporteur:** Genon K Jensen, Executive Director Health and Environment Alliance

The participants discussed how the health community can get more involved in the environmental policy domain. Health is in itself one of the biggest issues today, no one can ignore it. It is important look at the economic framework. Health needs to be framed within a cost-saving/benefit rhetoric. It was recognized that working on the local level is easier and that it is a better way to reach people directly.

New opportunities have been identified such as the impact assessment board: DG ENV is represented there and SANCO should be as well. Health costs could be brought in the discussions there. Another issue that was tackled during the breakout session was the link between agriculture reform and health. Pesticides are clearly an issue – people need to understand the link with agricultural policy. The group also discussed how to make European Parliamentarians more active in presenting data. We should take the example of what was done during several years when the European Parliament was presenting data to the European Commission in a more structured way. This would also be a way to increase public debate on these issues.



## Closing remarks by Jeremy Wates, EEB Secretary General

**Mr Wates** started by paying tribute to the rich quality of contributions during the first day of the conference - it had been a lively day full of discussions, interesting debates and exchanges.

He reminded the audience that initially the environmental community had been quite enthusiastic and hopeful about the new European Commission. The EEB had aimed to be proactive to set the agenda for the coming years. However, all of that had changed when President Juncker announced his priorities and plans. Since then, the EEB had been reluctantly forced into a more defensive mode. This had an impact on the conference. Initially, the conference had aimed at being more forward-looking, but because of the Juncker agenda, the conference had focused more on defending existing standards.

Mr Wates however then pointed out some positive notes from the morning session, particularly the fact that Commissioner Vella had clearly stated that the European Commission had no intention to weaken environmental legislation. Kathleen van Brempt MEP had also encouraged positive thinking and asked NGOs to be more optimistic. He highlighted that there were positive signs that Member States had concerns about the Commission's rollback of environmental policy. Indeed, on the day of the conference itself, eleven Environment Ministers including three big Member States - France, Italy and Germany - had sent a letter to the European Commission in defence of the air and circular economy packages.

The EEB regretted that President Juncker and Vice President Timmermans were not in the conference room despite having been invited to speak. The conference had seen the participation of top-level environmental politicians and officials from UNEP, OECD and the EU institutions and agencies but the President and his first Vice President, whose role in shaping policies that affect the environment is central, were missing. Neither had sent a substitute nor a message. They had defended their refusal by saying that they would not be attending conferences for the time being. They had also recently turned down meeting requests from the Green10. He reiterated that these signals were not encouraging for the future, but that hopefully this would be rectified in the near future.

Mr Wates reminded the audience that a major challenge for the environmental community would be to break the silos inside the movement. There is a need for a paradigm shift. Individual intelligence needs to be translated into societal intelligence. He then highlighted some of the demands that had emerged throughout the day, especially the need to place sustainability centre stage. We need to see the sustainability mandate of Vice President Timmermans as an opportunity, and to push for that to really happen. He regretted though that while Mr Timmermans' mandate had been changed to include sustainability, his title had not.

He further recalled that the environmental community needed to push for effective implementation of the 7th environmental action plan, and that the Commission could not simply ignore it. The mid-term review of the EU 2020 strategy and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals would be important opportunities to advocate for more sustainability in Europe and globally. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy should also be revisited and updated.

Mr Wates stressed the need to challenge the deregulation ideology, previously linked with the Stoiber Group but now strongly reflected in the Juncker priorities. People needed to understand that you do not need deregulation to boost the economy. It is not because a new regulation is introduced that an old one should be scrapped. He also stressed that deregulation and euroscepticism are not the same thing and that there is a need to be clear on that.

He restated several reasons for the environmental community to remain optimistic. The anti-scientific approach must face reality sooner or later and public opinion, if mobilised, can really help in reversing current trends.

Jeremy Wates concluded with a positive note from this special day celebrating the EEB's 40th anniversary by quoting David Baldock from the IEEP:

'Europe is in the front line for a sustainable world and we have the infrastructures in place to do a lot of good things, so let's make the best of it.'



TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2014

## Module 4: Strengthening the movement for environmental change

*This module focused on how to achieve the policy objectives identified in the previous modules, benefitting from feedback from key partners and the experiences of other stakeholders groups.*

*This session was restricted to a smaller number of participants with some 250 people attending from the environmental community. The key difference from the previous day was the focus on debate and moving the issues forward, as opposed to day one, which centred on issues identification and prioritisation.*

*Unlike the previous day, participants sat clustered together in groups of ten, and after each expert intervention, lively discussions among peers took place, with immediate feedback, further questions and follow up. This format created a deeper engagement to the issues at stake among participants and allowed thorough examination of the methods utilised by the environmental community to create the changes that were so clearly identified as needed on day one.*

*Participants exchanged views openly and vigorously, new networks were developed networked and conversations continued after the event. The report of day two is a summary of the main challenges and opportunities raised by speakers in the context of strengthening the movement for environmental change.*

### Opening session

**Moderator:** Ralph Hallo, former EEB President

**Keynote speech:** Janez Potocnik, former EU Commissioner for the Environment

Former EEB President **Ralph Hallo** opened the second conference day and introduced the keynote speaker, former EU Commissioner for the Environment Mr Janez Potocnik. Potocnik stressed that clear thinking on the circular economy and resource efficiency is crucial. Just like in a football match, markets need clear rules to function properly. One obstacle to progress lies in human behaviour itself. At home we take great care that our actions protect future generations but we do not apply the same thinking and behaviour when we are in the public policy arena. In the policy arena, short-term thinking often wins over long-term planning and we ignore the need to put policies in place to help those who will face difficulties in the transition to a sustainable future.

**Mr Potocnik** called on the environmental community to continue to push for access to justice. He strongly encouraged participants to lobby the Council and the European Parliament should the new European Commission decide to choose a reactionary path when it comes to environmental matters.

[Download Janez Potocnik's Powerpoint-presentation here.](#)



## Introduction to world café discussion

**Moderator:** Angelo Caserta, Regional Director, BirdLife Europe, Chair of the Green 10

### Key strengths and weaknesses of the environmental movement in Europe

**Perspective:** Stefan Scheuer, Director of Stefan Scheuer Consulting and former EEB Policy Director

**Perspective:** Jagoda Munic, Chair, Friends of the Earth International and member of Zelena Akcija (Green Action), Croatia

**Perspective:** Raymond van Ermen, Executive Director, European Partners for the Environment and former EEB Secretary General

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

What can we do differently?

- Form alliances with partners other than other NGOs
- Ask partners to tell their own stories
- Raise awareness of how our work improves society (not just the environment)
- Talk to Ministries and Commissioners other than those with environment portfolios
- Define different messages for different audiences
- Focus on local conflicts. Show that protests can work
- Have a new approach to the Common Agricultural Policy, similar to that of the energy sector

What should we keep doing?

- Give voice back to citizens. Avoid that the EEB is perceived as a white-collar movement. Get back to the grassroots
- Continue to strengthen cooperation, within the movement AND externally

### Building alliances

**Perspective:** Monique Goyens, Director General, BEUC – the European Consumer Organisation

**Perspective:** Heather Roy, President, Social Platform

**Perspective:** Seamus Jeffreson, Director, CONCORD

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

- Set up criteria on transparency and ethics for a structured dialogue with business
- There is competition for funding. This limits our possibilities to cooperate on everything and/or be everywhere
- Minimize the lack of communication and coordination between organisations
- Be resilient – include both society and environmental points of view
- Businesses understand money and image – we can collaborate by identifying common messages and interests (small potentially, but which can grow)
- To build alliances we could second staff to one others' organisations to have a common understanding, or set up an exchange scheme for Directors
- The relationship between EU NGOs and national NGOs can be improved through forward planning and by having someone working on EU issues in national organisations

## Reaching out to the wider public

**Perspective:** Joanna Sullivan, EEB Deputy Secretary General and Director of Communications

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

- Environmental NGOs should speak truth to power.
- Be bold. Go to business and government and tell them exactly how they are wrong
- We must change the symbols of success. Football/Twitter can be entry points for our own values
- Don't use clever language for the sake of it. Stick to basics. Simplicity is key
- Stay relevant. Adapt campaigns to national and local specificities
- Language is culturally specific. Take care not to offend or cause misunderstandings through content and design of communication.
- The **Fishfight** campaign, involving celebrity chefs (UK, ES, PL) was a truly pan-European campaign. A model campaign
- Join forces with initiatives organised by others on the community level to connect with people at the local level
- Be behaviour-oriented. Changing habits is very hard but must be done. Give practical examples to build momentum for change

## Getting through to decision makers

**Perspective:** Christian Hey, Secretary General, German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU)

Small table discussions // Plenary feedback

- There is a difference between bottom up and top down approaches
- Decision makers are very different. We must adjust our messages for them. Get to know them. What are they sensitive to?
- Don't always focus on advocating to Commissioners and Ministers. We also need strong connections with their advisors.
- Direct discussions with politicians versus public campaigns? A mixture of both is needed. If no defined entry points then we must 'force the law' - create scandal.
- Climate is one of the defining issues of our time. Should it be the main focus for the EEB for the next year? Capitalize on expertise at this key moment.

## Close of conference

The conference was closed by Angelo Caserta, Regional Director, BirdLife Europe, Chair of the Green 10 and Mikael Karlsson, EEB President.





# Annexes

## EEB 12 Stars Award Ceremony for exceptional contributions to the cause of environmental sustainability in Europe

To mark its 40th anniversary, the European Environmental Bureau presented four 'Twelve Stars for the Environment' Awards.

The winners were all outstanding individuals who in different ways had made exceptional contributions to the cause of environmental sustainability in Europe. The Awards were presented in Brussels at the BIP House of the Capital Region on 1 December 2014 .

The winners had been selected by the EEB Board following an open nomination process and recommendations for nominees from the EEB Twelve Star Award Committee consisting of the EEB President, Vice-Presidents and Secretary General.

The winners were presented with a piece of art created by Belgian artist Natacha de Locht from household waste. Read more about Natacha and her work [here](#).

## Winners

### *Christer Ågren, Sweden*

AirClim, Air Pollution & Climate Secretariat, Sweden.

For his contribution to combating air pollution in Europe. Read the full rationale [here](#).

### *Corinna Zwielaag, Germany*

BUND für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, Landesverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany.

For her contribution to the Baltic Green Belt and nature protection in Europe. Read the full rationale [here](#).

### *Janez Potočnik, Slovenia*

European Commissioner for the Environment 2010-2014

For his science-based approach to promoting environmental sustainability. Read the full rationale [here](#).

### *Marc Pallemmaerts, Belgium – Posthumous Award*

In memory of an outstanding champion of the environment

For his contribution to strengthening environmental law

Read the full rationale [here](#).

# Winners



# List of participants

<b>SPEAKERS</b>			
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>
Athens University	Michael	Scoullos	Professor of Environmental Chemistry, Athens University, former EEB President
Austrian Federal Ministry of Environment	Elisabeth	Freytag-Rigler	Director of EU Coordination on Environment
BEUC – the European Consumer Organization	Monique	Goyens	Director General
BirdLife Europe	Angelo	Caserta	Regional Director, Chair of the Green 10
BirdLife Europe	Ariel	Brunner	Policy Director
CATAPA	Charlotte	Christiaens	Coordinator
Centre for Science and the Environment, India	Sunita	Narain	Director General
CHEM Trust	Michael	Warhurst	Executive Director
CIDSE	Bernd	Nilles	Secretary General
CONCORD	Seamus	Jeffreson	Director
E3G	Tom	Burke	Founding Director and Chairman
End Ecocide in Europe	Prisca	Merz	Initiator
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