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New Year's
Resolution

Make 2016 the Year of
Sustainable Development

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GREENING THE JUNCKER PRIORITIES

Jeremy Wates
EEB Secretary General



Editorial

The environment is widely recognised as one of the success stories of the European Union – not necessarily in terms of arriving at something we could call environmental sustainability, there we clearly have a long way to go, but in terms of how much worse things would have been if environmental issues had not been addressed at European level. This success is reflected internally in the EU's own environmental legislation, built up over several decades, but also externally through the region's role as a leader and a facilitator at the international level.

A real and imminent threat to these achievements has recently been posed by the UK Prime Minister's demand to the EU to agree to a specific target for reducing the 'burden' of EU regulation to businesses. This goes way beyond earlier demands to remove unnecessary administrative burdens because it would apply irrespective of the benefits of EU regulation to society as a whole, which often vastly outweigh the costs to business even in purely monetary

terms. Such a target could seriously impede efforts to solve major problems like ecosystem collapse, climate change and the depletion of the world's resources. It could not only undermine further progress on the path towards sustainability but even reverse what has been achieved through action at European level so far. The EU's efforts to tackle these challenges together with its economic and social ones should not be allowed to be held to ransom by the UK, nor should Westminster be allowed to impose its deregulatory agenda on the EU.

Worryingly, however, leading figures in the European Commission, not least President Jean-Claude Juncker, have up to now ignored the environmental success story and the fact that undermining it will erode support for the EU itself. Instead, they seem to believe that support from business associations celebrating the EU single market will be sufficient to engage citizens in the European project.

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The need to tackle climate change made an appearance in Juncker's Ten Priorities, the guiding policy framework behind his tenure at the helm of the Commission, but only as part of an energy and green growth agenda which fails to consider the bigger environmental picture.

The most recent 2016 Work Programme from the EU executive has some glimmers of hope. Here the environment, and the need to protect it, plays at least a minor role, spurred on by the success of the Nature Alert campaign where more than 500 000 Europeans called for the EU to enforce, undermine, EU biodiversity laws and the outcry that followed the controversial withdrawal of a circular economy package. It is also a first reaction to agreement on a new global agenda of transformational change for sustainable development.

This is a small step in the right direction, but far too little. By signing up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 universally applicable sustainable development goals, the EU has implicitly

committed itself to putting sustainability at the heart of its policies. It now needs to implement the global agenda at European level, so that 'Transforming our World' (the title of the 2030 Agenda) becomes 'Transforming Europe'. This implies a complete overhaul of the Ten Juncker Priorities with environmental concerns reinstated under an overarching commitment to sustainable development. Unless we address the challenges facing the climate, nature and wildlife, the EU, in common with all other regions of the world, will be unable to tackle economic and social issues. A failure to align the Juncker priorities with the new global sustainable development agenda would either imply that they are already aligned with it, which is manifestly false, or that the EU is not serious about its international commitments.

The outcome of the Paris climate talks provides a further reason for the Juncker priorities to be revised. The final text agreed at Paris states that countries will seek to keep temperature rise to "well below" 2°C above pre-industrial levels

and that they will "pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C", acknowledging that this is necessary to the very survival of the most vulnerable nations. To its credit, the EU was a key instigator of this reference to the lower temperature, yet the Commission's narrow and outdated jobs and growth agenda will not allow global warming to be contained at either of these levels. Innovative ways to tackle these challenges are largely lacking from the Commission's thinking.

The negotiation in 2015 of a revised Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making between the three main EU institutions might have provided an opportunity for the required reorientation in that thinking. However, through its initial proposal the Commission actually attempted to get the other two institutions to sign up to its initial set of priorities – an approach which was fortunately rejected by the Parliament and Council. The first anniversary of the Juncker Commission, weeks after the adoption of the SDGs, might also have provided the opportunity for the Commission to announce a revised set of priorities but this did not happen.

This is why, to make the task easier, the EEB has come forward with its own proposal for how the Commission could transform its priorities into a more forward looking, fit-for-purpose agenda – the Juncker Commission Political Priorities Revisited – and thus show how the EU could tackle environmental, social and economic issues in Europe and face up to its global responsibilities.

We look forward to engaging with the Commission, the European Parliament, national ministers and others on these new priorities and to hearing what they have to say about our ideas. We would like to see 2016 designated as the year of delivery on sustainable development, as the year when the EU started to live up to its national and international responsibilities.

"Today we celebrate, tomorrow we have to act," said EU climate chief, Miguel Arias Cañete, at the end of COP21. A greening of the Juncker priorities would offer a clear roadmap for EU action. •



WHAT PRICE THE UK STAYING IN THE EU?



BY 18 February 2016, European leaders will have decided how much they are willing to give UK Prime Minister David Cameron for him to recommend to the UK public that they vote to remain in a 'reformed' European Union in an upcoming referendum.

The concern for environmentalists is that there may be a price for keeping the UK in the European Union with future costs for the environment across the continent and beyond.

In particular, Cameron's demand for a target to cut the total regulatory burden on business could lead to a block on new environmental legislation. Worryingly, this demand was also supported by a further 18 Member States in a letter to Vice-President Timmermans on 26 November 2015.

The UK renegotiation of its membership of the European Union is therefore really a battle over the future direction of the EU itself - and whether its ambition is more towards a reductionist free trade area or global leadership in the environmental sphere.

The EU has been an important player in environmental policy, with the UK one of the driving forces on many occasions. The Union has now formed what can be considered to be one of the most influential bodies of environmental law in the world.

Its environmental achievements include:

- A substantial decline in most industrial sources of air and water pollution.
- A fall in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and growth in the deployment of renewable energy.
- A substantial, though insufficient, brake on the continuing decline of biodiversity.
- A transformation in waste management, with an increase in recycling rates and the first steps towards the creation of a more circular economy.
- The establishment of a thorough system for the review of chemicals leading to the withdrawal of many toxic substances from use.
- The foundations for addressing the mounting pressures on the marine environment in the form of a legislative framework which is starting to have an effect.

However, this important body of environmental regulation has recently come under challenge. In a statement to the UK parliament in 2011, Finance Minister George Osborne stated that we should not burden businesses "with endless social and environmental goals - however worthy in their own right". He also insisted that the government "will make sure that the gold plating of EU rules on things like habitats aren't placing ridiculous costs on British businesses".

The UK is pushing hard in its renegotiation, and through other means, for this de-regulatory approach to be adopted within the EU and there are influential champions in the current European Commission where so-called 'better regulation' has been given the highest priority under European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

All eyes will therefore be on what deal Cameron secures at the next European Council meeting on 18-19 February and if it includes something similar to the rules that have been introduced in the UK whereby any new laws have to be accompanied by the removal of existing regulation. While we all agree that smart, efficient regulation and implementation is what the environment, business and citizens need, it should not be a cover for the removal of vital environmental protections. The RSPB is working with other civil society partners to ensure that the environment is a significant part of the public debate during the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. •

Stephen Hinchley,
Head of European Policy
Campaigns, Royal Society
for the Protection of Birds
(RSPB), UK



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TOWARDS 1.5°C – THE EU AFTER COP21



WE enter 2016 with a fundamentally new international platform for climate policy. Despite shortcomings in the Paris treaty, the fact that 195 countries are now in agreement and have set stricter objectives to tackle climate change will have repercussions on politics around the globe. In the European Union, taken seriously, the historic Paris deal calls for a new set of climate and energy policies.

As the negotiations started in Paris, it was already clear that the circumstances were much better than before preceding COPs: climate science and climate economics had delivered stronger messages than ever before, underlining the need for urgent and immediate action; the US and China had agreed on measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; companies were calling for action; and the costs of renewable energy supplies had fallen rapidly.

In addition, many ministers and negotiators whom I met at COP21 wanted to restore trust in politics at a time of economic, refugee and terror crises, and saw the climate negotiations as the opportunity for the world to come together in solidarity.

Well-known stumbling blocks did, unsurprisingly, make themselves known during the talks, but more heartening were the new alliances that were formed, most notably “the high ambition coalition,” which included the EU, the US, Mexico, Colombia and the African, Pacific and Caribbean states. It was particularly inspiring during the presentation of the coalition to watch EU Climate Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete and US Climate Envoy Todd Stern calling for higher climate ambitions in a joint press conference.

The fact the “high ambition coalition” eventually found agreement with China, India and the other parties means the overall result is indeed a historic and ambitious climate agreement. However, parties now need to show how they plan to put the deal into practice.

One key outcome is the new temperature target aimed at holding the global temperature increase to “well below 2°C” and to “pursue efforts” to limit it to 1.5°C”. Recent research, expressed for instance in the Earth Statement from June 2015, shows that if this goal is to be reached, then global emissions must likely peak soon and reach close to zero levels by around 2050.

Even though the deal unfortunately did not include a translation of the temperature target in terms of quantified emission reductions, it is difficult to see how the “1.5°C target” does not compel the EU to adopt a new generation of objectives.

To meet its global responsibilities, the EU rapidly needs to scale up all its present emission targets, deliver its fair share of already agreed climate financing to developing countries, promote additional financing, and offer new support to address climate loss and damage in the countries that have done little to cause climate change but that are already suffering significantly from its effects.

Regarding greenhouse gases, the EEB has constantly called for a reduction target of at least 60% by 2030. This must be seen as a minimum level of ambition and, ideally, the EU should reach close to zero well before 2050.

This necessitates a new set of policies and the creation of an Energy Union that puts a stop to fossil fuels in the EU by means of substantially higher energy efficiency and a switch to renewable energy. This in turn should be promoted by phasing out all subsidies to fossil fuels and by carrying out a green tax reform that implements the polluter pays principle in the energy, transport and agricultural sectors. In Paris, the EU called strongly for the global climate deal to be periodically reviewed and for policies to be updated. A first dialogue on this will be held by 2018. The EU cannot send a better signal up front to that meeting than by adopting a new set of climate targets and tools, and by agreeing to increasingly contribute to global climate financing. •

Mikael Karlsson,
President, European
Environmental Bureau



WANT TO INFLUENCE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES? VISIT MYUNEA.ORG



THE United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) will hold its second meeting in May 2016, following on from its inaugural session in 2014. Designed, in the words of Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), “to place environmental issues at the heart of the global agenda,” the UNEA has a key role to play in ensuring the implementation of recent international agreements. Most notable of these is the freshly inked Paris climate deal and the broader 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda agreed under the auspices of the UN last September.

Speaking at a conference that was jointly organised by the EEB, UNEP and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels in November, Michele Candotti, UNEP’s Chief of Executive Office, stated that one of the challenges of his organisation was to “turn the UNEA into an environmental parliament”. To make this become reality, civil society organisations, together with governments, must fully engage with its processes and stress the importance of it fulfilling this potential.

To facilitate participation for civil society organisations in the UNEA meetings, UNEP recently launched an interactive website, MyUNEA.org. The site is open to anyone with ideas or opinions on global environmental governance and allows users to share their thoughts ahead of the next meeting. MyUNEA.org is also a treasure trove of reports, documents, and case studies of solutions to sustainable development issues, and a great source of attractive visuals and maps. Furthermore, it contains a comprehensive timeline where users can check the relevant windows of opportunity for influencing UNEA processes or look up the outcomes of preparatory meetings.

Following on from the first UNEA meeting in 2014, this time the focus is on “Healthy Environment – Healthy People”. For EU NGOs, this thematic focus will allow all relevant actors to identify the concrete tools available for them to take an integrated and universal approach to the implementation of the SDGs. This includes those related to critical areas such as air quality, healthy ecosystems, chemicals, waste and others that may emerge during the preparatory process, as well as developing strategic, multi-stakeholder partnerships to address ongoing and emerging environmental issues. The UNEA is the only forum to cover fully the environmental dimension of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The EEB is one of the two facilitators helping the global NGO community to participate in and to prepare the UNEA-2.

Please contact me if you would like to join: leida.rijnhout@eeb.org. •

Leida Rijnhout,
Director Global Policies
and Sustainability



NEW RESEARCH REVEALS CAP’S TRUE COLOURS



ALTHOUGH the 2013 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform was supposed to make the policy greener, the end result is a text which is green on paper and grey in our fields. This is because so-called CAP greening measures were watered down, numerous exemptions to the rules were added to the text, and

Member States were afforded lots of flexibility to implement the new policy as they see fit.

New EEB-commissioned research from the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) has confirmed that Member States are frequently using the CAP’s in-built flexibility to choose the least environmentally-friendly elements from the options available to them. The study looked at the environmental impact of nine Member States’ choices when putting in place greening measures such as crop diversification, maintaining permanent grassland, and setting up farm nature protection zones (Ecological Focus Areas).

The researchers found an overall lack of environmental ambition as well as a ‘business as usual’ approach. Ninety per cent of countries, for instance, do not fully restrict pesticide use on ecological focus areas. The trend is to offer farmers maximum flexibility to implement the measures instead of targeting the farming practices that can help reverse the current decline of natural resources we are facing on many EU farms.

Another EEB-commissioned study from the German Institut für Agrarökologie und Biodiversität (IFAB) revealed that the state of biodiversity on arable land in 10 European countries is very poor,

even in regions where it was expected to be high. The researchers found, for example, that poppies are disappearing fast and are only present in 13% of Europe's fields.

This is bad news for nature and means the EU is not on course to meet the goals in its 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. All evidence begins to suggest that the greening

exercise was a complicated way to secure public money for ever more problematic practices which our countryside can no longer afford.

An in-depth review of the policy is indeed needed: 40% of the EU budget is spent on CAP and it is time to see if it is still value for money. It is time for a CAP Fitness Check to find out if the policy is delivering

on the sustainable management of natural resources. What Europe urgently needs is a truly green comprehensive food and farming policy. •

Faustine Bas-Defossez,
EEB Senior Policy Officer
for Agriculture



EEB MEMBER FOCUS

News from EEB members and working groups



PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON AN UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT

Speleology is not just an adventure sport but a passion. It is a cross-disciplinary research activity dealing with caves as complex, evolving systems and combines the knowledge of chemistry, biology, geology, hydrology, physics, meteorology and cartography.

Consequently, speleology is also inextricably linked with the protection of areas where caves occur as geotopes (geological features), where they are necessary for water supply or provide unique habitats for certain species of plants or animals. The Fédération Européenne de Spéléologie (FSE) currently represents 31 countries and about 38 000 individual speleologists. The FSE issues an occasional EuroSpeleo newsletter and has established the so-called EuroSpeleo

Projects, which support activities such as congresses, workshops, trainings and expeditions. Members are active in the IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), specifically in the Caves and Karst Specialist Group and the Geoheritage Specialist Group. FSE is part of the EEB's water and biodiversity working groups and since this year has been represented on the EEB Board. To fulfil its tasks FSE also has a number of Commissions, the most active of which is the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC). Each year it honours an exemplary activity through its "EuroSpeleo Protection Label".

Since 2008 the ECPC has been fighting to promote underground issues in the European institutions. For instance, we brought a written declaration to the European Parliament calling on caves to be protected as cultural, natural and environmental heritage and in 2011 we presented a petition to the European Commission demanding that the contents of caves such as dripstones, archaeological and palaeontological findings should be protected. Unfortunately neither initiative was successful, but they gave European speleologists strong visibility in the institutions.

Caves are represented in EU legislation as habitats under the Natura 2000 guidelines. However, only in some EU member states are speleologists actually involved in the process of monitoring the Natura network. To try to ensure that caves receive the protection they, and the habitats they support, need in all European countries, an ECPC Symposium entitled 'Caves & Karst - Protection and Conservation under EU Law' will be held at the EuroSpeleo Conference 2016. Input from other organisations on this subject is always very welcome. Please be part of the underground world and get in touch with us. protection@eurospeleo.org

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Bärbel Vogel President,
German Speleological Federation

Note from editor:
We are always looking for stories from our members, and so if you want to share news or information about your organisation, please contact philippa.jones@eeb.org.

SUCCESS CORNER

News from EEB
members and working
groups



EEB TAKES A DIM VIEW OF LIGHTING INDUSTRY

Consumers are being fooled into thinking that light bulbs are brighter than they really are. The EEB, with Brussels-based partner ECOS, exposed the VW-like funny business late last month, causing an explosion of media coverage in German-speaking countries as well as mainstream coverage in the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland and beyond.

The EEB's Coolproducts campaign placed the story, which aired the frustration of an industry whistleblower fed up with what he says is dishonest behaviour, à la VW. The exposé revealed that all the big name firms are at it, printing claims about lumens (light strength) and wattage that they know to be inaccurate. For some bulbs, their claims are out by as much as 25%. Companies are getting away with this by using a legal loophole created to allow for measurement inaccuracies that are largely out-of-date.

This means that national authorities are powerless to act on the issue until the European Commission closes the loophole.

A 'silver bullet' amendment to do just that across all home appliances had been drafted by Commission staff years ago, but then apparently buried by a leadership nervous about more VW headlines, or so we understand. The text was said to be doomed to a life of gathering dust. However, some 700 news stories later and the Commission had unearthed the file and accelerated it to the next stage of the amendment process.

The lighting industry, on the other hand, used the moment of intense scrutiny to push forward a solution that will take us back by nearly a decade. Trade body LightingEurope congratulated the EEB on drawing attention to the inaccurate wattage issue, before suggesting that a proposed merger of various Ecodesign Directive lighting regulations would be a way to solve the problem. However, the plan on the table today threatens to unpick minimum energy standards adopted in 2009.

Coolproducts will be working hard to avoid this happening, but this would not be the first time that the lighting industry has backed proposals that are bad news for the environment and the consumer. Last spring, the industry succeeded in having a planned phase-out of one type of hopelessly wasteful halogen bulbs by September 2016 deferred by two years [<http://www.coolproducts.eu/blog/eu-freezes-halogen-ban>] - the first time that an Ecodesign measure has been rolled back.

This unnecessary move will slow the advance of halogen bulbs, costing consumers €6.6 billion in higher bills, but benefit certain firms planning to sell their halogen lighting divisions later in 2016.

Lighting accounts for a fair chunk of energy use in Europe, about the same as the residential consumption of France, the UK and Italy combined [<http://www.coolproducts.eu/product/lightbulbs>]. Without efficiency policies in place, demand is expected to grow by a third by 2020. But EU policies are having a great effect more broadly. For example, a study out this month showed that thanks in part to more efficient general home appliances, UK energy demand has dropped by over a quarter in the last 10 years.

There is no hard evidence of sectors beyond lighting using tolerances to dupe consumers. But the loophole is an open invitation to many, and Coolproducts calculates that if tolerances were used in all product groups, Europeans would be paying €2 billion a year more in energy bills.

Jack Hunter,
EEB Senior Communications Officer

SMOKE AND MIRRORS AS COMMISSION ISSUES CIRCULAR ECONOMY PACKAGE WITH WEAKER WASTE TARGETS



ON 2 December 2015, the European Commission released its revised Circular Economy Package – a year after the original proposal was controversially shelved. It proposes revisions to a number of EU laws dealing with resource issues including waste, packaging, eco-design, and landfill, and includes a communication setting out a circular economy action plan. After promises by Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans that the new package would be more ambitious than its predecessor, how does it measure up?

The EEB welcomes the concrete action plan of measures related to production, consumption, the recycled materials market and new areas such as the bio-based economy. However, the waste targets have been watered down compared to the 2014 proposal, despite a clear call from civil society groups, progressive businesses and the European Parliament to maintain ambition levels.

The food waste prevention target has been scrapped and replaced by a monitoring methodology, the municipal solid waste and packaging recycling targets for 2030 are each 5% lower, and a five-year transition period has

been granted to less advanced Member States. The methodology for recycling is looser, no longer accounting for the real output of recycling plants and allowing a 10% 'tolerance' to what can be defined as recycling. While the much-needed mandatory separate collection of bio-waste remains, this requirement only applies where technically, economically and environmentally possible, which is ultimately a loophole for those not willing to act.

Furthermore, the decision to downgrade waste reduction ambitions sits jarringly against a growing body of evidence showing that a true, ambitious circular economy is good for the economy and the environment. Indeed, higher targets mean benefits across the board. Reports by the Ellen MacArthur foundation, the Club of Rome and the Green Alliance all demonstrate that a radical transformation scenario is most beneficial for job creation and net cost savings. The Commission's own impact assessment states that the higher the ambition for waste management, the better it is for the economy.

Finally, for all the good intentions of the circular economy action plan, it does not look set to be followed by swift and

concrete measures to put it into practice. Hesitation around boosting Ecodesign – the consideration of environmental impacts at the design stage of a product – is a prime example. While the action plan contains encouraging language, in reality plans to release measures to improve the ecodesign of televisions and displays (intended to be reviewed by 2013) have been further delayed and revised proposals for resource use issues for white goods are weak.

Ultimately, the promise of more ambition has not been kept. We have effectively lost a year, and are left with weaker provisions on waste and no clear indication that the Commission will walk the talk on other parts of the circle, such as cutting resource use through better product design standards. We must now work with the European Parliament, progressive member states, business and other stakeholders to unlock the many potentials of a genuine circular economy through real ambition. •

Stephane Arditi,
Policy Manager:
Products & Waste



EU CHEMICALS LAW NEEDS TIGHTENING TO PROTECT PEOPLE AND NATURE, SHOWS EEB REPORT



SINCE the EU flagship regulation on chemicals, concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), was approved in 2006, substantial progress in the management of chemical substances has been achieved in Europe. Indeed, the European chemicals legislation was revolutionary when it was introduced and is bringing about many positive changes. Some toxic and hazardous substances have already been restricted, and companies and other stakeholders now have a better knowledge of the chemical substances used and produced in Europe as well as their risks.

One part of REACH that is vital to ensure the phase out and substitution of substances of very high concern by safer alternatives is the authorisation process that places substances that pose an important risk to society or the environment on a list (Annex XIV). These chemicals are then banned in Europe unless permission for a specific

use is granted. Authorisation therefore recognises that consumers should be protected from these substances in household products and that only in genuinely exceptional circumstances should permission for use be granted. Furthermore, under this process, the burden of proof is on the operators to demonstrate that hazardous substances are necessary for the benefit of society. This all sounds very good in theory. However, a new report published by the EEB entitled *A Roadmap to Revitalise REACH* shows that in practice the authorisation process is not working so well and that the banning of the most problematic chemicals is too slow.

In fact, many substances of concern are still produced and used in the EU. At least 1,400 substances are estimated to have hazardous properties giving rise to very high concern. However, only 163 of them have been included in the Candidate List of substances of very high concern (SVHCs) to be eventually regulated. Moreover, the European Commission

has so far only included 31 SVHCs in the Annex XIV list of banned substances and, since August 2014, the Commission has imposed an effective moratorium, meaning that no new substances have been added to the list. Ironically, previous efforts by the Commission to 'simplify' the process as part of its Better Regulation agenda have actually made it harder to effectively implement the authorisation process. This means that too few hazardous substances are being phased out, putting human health and the environment at risk.

Of even more concern is the fact that so far all applications by industry to continue using the very few SVHCs in Annex XIV have been granted apparently 'by default' by the Commission as recommended by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). This is even the case for flawed dossiers, such as those for substances for which safer alternatives are already available on the market. As a consequence, businesses that are lagging behind are finding ways to keep obsolete substances on the market.

The EEB report underlines these flaws and sets out a clear path for reform showing how the authorisation procedure can be made fully fit for purpose to achieve its main goal, namely health and environmental protection. We need the Commission, the ECHA and EU Member States to pick up this baton of reform now and properly implement REACH in order to ensure that European citizens and the environment receive the best possible protection from dangerous chemicals and that sustainable innovation is fully supported. •

Tatiana Santos,
EEB Senior Policy Officer
for Chemicals



EU NATURE LAWS NEED POLICY COHERENCE TO STOP BIODIVERSITY LOSS



NGOs and industry, as well as EU and national policymakers, came together on 20 November 2015 at the European Commission's Birds and Habitats Directives Fitness Check conference to discuss the preliminary findings of the ongoing review of the two laws.

The preliminary findings, drawn up by a group of experts hired by the Commission, suggest that the two Nature Directives are up to the job and that 'modernisation' is best achieved through innovative approaches to implementation. The experts found that where fully implemented the laws are effective and deliver far more benefits than they cost.

Unfortunately the presented findings failed to fully capture the extent to which other policies still undermine the Nature Directives, which means there is a risk that the EU executive will fail to swiftly provide adequate responses where they are most needed. Given the Fitness Check is a backwards-looking exercise, it will, for example, most likely fail to sufficiently acknowledge that the recently reformed Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is set to continue driving the degradation of our natural environment or that the EU's Bioenergy policy is likely to result in further negative effects on biodiversity.

This is unfortunate because at a time when public budgets are stretched it is important to clearly acknowledge the link between policies which have detrimental impacts on biodiversity and the severe and chronic underfunding of nature conservation: the longer it will take us to reform such policies, the more difficult and expensive halting the loss of biodiversity will become.

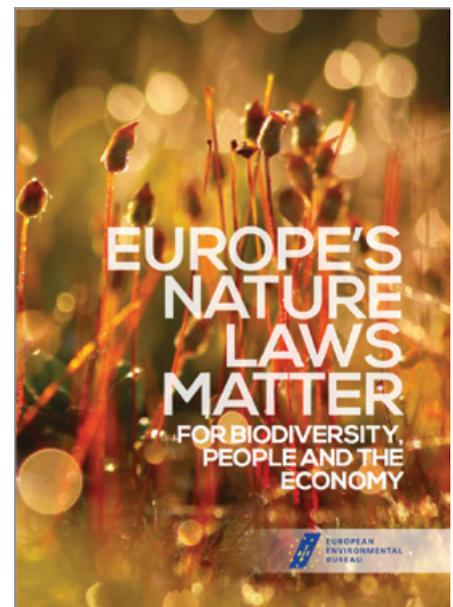
It is fundamental that measures proposed as the outcome of the Fitness Check help break the vicious cycle in which harmful incentives and subsidies embedded in our policy frameworks cause damage to our natural environment, requiring ever increasing amounts of public money to repair.

It is time for root and branch reform of the EU budget in order to remove the still ubiquitous trade-offs at the expense of biodiversity. We must also encourage a fuller exploitation of synergies between biodiversity conservation and delivering on other policy objectives. Without such vital changes we are bound to fail at halting biodiversity loss.

To underline the importance of all this, the EEB recently published, Europe's Nature Laws Matter: for biodiversity, people and the economy.

This publication features 17 people from 11 EU countries with direct professional experience of EU nature laws. All interviewees favour more implementation and better enforcement of the Birds and Habitats Directives. •

Leonardo Mazza,
EEB Senior Policy Officer
for Biodiversity



FIRST LIST OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES: A FAR TOO MODEST START



INVASIVE alien species (IAS) rank among the main threats to biodiversity in Europe and are capable of causing significant damage to human health and the economy. The EU IAS Regulation was adopted in 2014 and NGOs had high hopes that it would effectively address this global environmental issue in a coordinated manner at the European level.

On 4 December the IAS Committee, made up of representatives from all EU Member States, adopted a first list of invasive alien species of EU concern, which is expected to be adopted soon by the European Commission as an implementing regulation (an act which sets out how EU laws should be put in place). Member States would then have until mid-2017 to put appropriate control measures in place and, for those species not yet established in Europe, target the main pathways of introduction of listed species.

Unfortunately, the first list is far from complete as it identifies a mere 37 species. NGOs and the European Parliament have criticised it for being too short, for not focusing on prevention and for not including some species with the highest impact on biodiversity or related ecosystem services. For example, the American Mink (through predation) and various other mammal species (through hybridisation) have the potential to cause extinctions and are not listed. Neither are plants like the Hottentot Fig, Black Cherry or Lantana which have the potential to dominate landscapes, excluding other life forms. Marine species like the Lionfish or the Comb Jelly are also absent from

the list, so their most common pathway of introduction, ballast water, cannot be tackled through this regulation. This first list also fails to focus on prevention since a great majority of the species on it are already present in Europe.

Commissioner Vella announced at the Environment Council on 16 December that a second list is planned for 2016. If the enormous threat posed by invasive alien species is to be credibly addressed the next list needs to address the first list's shortcomings. Since only species for which risk assessments which are compliant with the criteria outlined in the IAS Regulation can make it onto the list, the Commission should put in place a process through which the most harmful are prioritised for risk assessment so these species can be included sooner rather than later.

Without swift and decisive action, invasive alien species will only become an even greater and more costly problem. •

Leonardo Mazza,
EEB Senior Policy Officer
for Biodiversity



FILM TELLS THE STORY OF HOW BIOMASS POWER THREATENS FORESTS

"IT seemed like every step of the way I discovered something scandalous had been happening in Europe. I was surprised to learn that EU policies say that burning wood for energy is considered carbon neutral."

This is how French film director Benoît Grimont described his experiences from making the documentary 'Threatened Forests' that the EEB together with other NGOs screened in Brussels late in 2015.

This compelling documentary tells the often surprising story of biomass power which is being promoted as part of the EU's renewable energy policies. What first might have sounded like a good idea now threatens forests in France, the US and Canada where trees are being cut to turn them into pellets that are burned in European power plants run by companies including E.ON and Drax.

What Grimont first thought would just be a nice film about forests has now set him off on tour educating people about the harmful impacts of poorly designed

policies. Following the Belgian premiere in Brussels the film was also screened in Paris with the support of the EEB during COP21, reminding negotiators that even though renewable energy is needed more than ever, we need to make sure it is the right kind of renewable energy. •

Read more at <http://eubioenergy.com/>

Sini Eräjää,
EEB Policy Officer,
Bioenergy



UPCOMING EVENTS

This newsletter is produced by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). The EEB is the largest federation of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe. It groups together more than 150 member organisations from 33 countries.

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NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: THE HIDDEN TRUTH

On 8 February the European Environmental Bureau and BirdLife Europe are holding a conference titled 'New Rural Development Plans (RDP) and the Environment: The Hidden Truth' which will be held at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels.

**READ OUR INVITATION
DOWNLOAD THE DRAFT AGENDA
REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE HERE.**

Please contact: jessica.greenstein@eeb.org

<http://www.eeb.org/index.cfm/news-events/index.cfm?displayTab=events>

FEATURED PUBLICATION

Every six months, the EEB prepares a memorandum to the incoming presidency of the EU, with cooperation from Seas at Risk and Birdlife Europe, that also includes the Ten Green Tests setting out how we rate the work on the environment by the outgoing presidency. This time we decided to give the memorandum a bit of a facelift. See what you think.

EEB MEMORANDUM TO THE DUTCH PRESIDENCY Including the Ten Green Tests



COMING AND GOING

COMMUNICATIONS CHANGES

The EEB was sad to part with Sébastien Pant, Communications Officer for Air Quality and Resource Efficiency, at the end of year. He has joined the European Consumers Organisation (BEUC), where we wish him well.

Happily, Paul Hallows joined us this month from Friends of the Earth Europe as Seb's replacement. There he worked on communications and youth activism. Paul holds degrees from the Universities of Oxford and Manchester.

Meanwhile, Philippa Nuttall Jones has been promoted from Senior Communications Officer to Communications Manager with responsibility for managing the communications team.

UPGRADE IN THE GPS TEAM

An intern with the EEB's Global Policies team, Eva Izquierdo has now been given a salaried position as Project Officer focusing on the Supply Cha!nge project. Her career in advocacy started

at Euromontana, where she was the Information Officer and coordinated the ECO bulletin for NGOs during the COP8 climate meeting. She also previously worked for the EEB member organisation Ecologistas en Accion in Madrid.

FARMING INTERN

Jessica Greenstein has joined the EEB as our agriculture intern for six months. Jessica is a South African who was born and raised in Hong Kong. She moved to Brussels three months ago and after helping to organise an event at the European Parliament on the greening of the CAP, she is currently working on the "New Rural Development Plans and the Environment: The Hidden Truth" conference that will take place on 8 February.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The EEB would also like to express its congratulations to our Senior Policy Officer for Agriculture, who recently got married and is now to be known as Faustine Bas-Defossez.