

# META



## SCOTTISH AMBITION

EEB Conference keynote speaker Roseanna Cunningham talks to META.

## EUROPE BEYOND COAL

The end of coal in Europe is on the horizon. A new campaign has formed to help make it a reality.

## ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Outgoing EEB EU Policy Director Pieter De Pous reflects on his time in Brussels and sees reason for optimism.



*Who is standing in the way of access to justice?*

The EU prides itself on being a world leader when it comes to promoting democratic standards around the world. But over the past few months, developments under the Aarhus Convention have revealed a democratic deficit right at the core of the EU: a European Commission which does not believe that its decisions should be challengeable before the courts by NGOs, even when international law requires it.

We look at how the EU's credibility has been damaged by this debacle and where we go to from here.

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| **PLANS TO CURB PLASTIC**

| **INDUSTRY LINKS EXPOSED**

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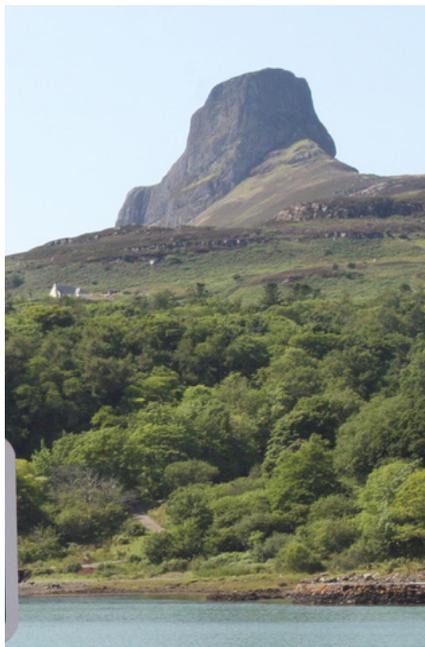
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Graphic: IC

## EDITORIAL

**ADDRESSING THE EU'S DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT**

Both President Juncker's State of the Union address in September and the publication of the Commission Work Programme (CWP) for 2018 in October signal the European Commission's desire to push forward with European integration, with the anticipated departure of the UK from the EU in March 2019 being seen as an opportunity to do so.

Environmentalists have by and large welcomed the strengthening of the powers of first the EEC, then the EC and now the EU to adopt and enforce laws and policies on the environment, if only for the empirical reason that it has delivered. No one seriously believes that such progress as has been made in tackling environmental problems in Europe would have been achieved if it had been left entirely to the Member States to pursue their policies at domestic level. And so, it might be assumed, more EU integration could still deliver more environmental benefits.

But generalised support for the principle of further EU integration should never be unconditional. Apart from the obvious need to ensure that sustainable development serves as the overarching goal of a more integrated EU – something that is far from guaranteed under today's political leaders – it is also essential that any further EU integration, any further ceding of sovereignty by Member States, is accompanied by increased transparency and democratic accountability of the EU institutions. At a rhetorical level, this appears to be recognised: President Juncker highlighted the rule of law in his State of the Union address as one of three principles that must anchor the European Union; the 2018 CWP contains a number of references to democracy under a heading calling for a 'more democratic Union'.

The reality is however very different. There is a significant democratic deficit when it comes to environmental decision-making at the level of the EU institutions, due to the fact that environmental NGOs and the wider public have virtually no access to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) to challenge the decisions of the EU institutions except in access to documents cases. As a result, the EU has been found to be in violation of the Aarhus Convention (see article below). Far from embracing the finding and addressing the problem, the Commission has fought tooth and nail to avoid its decisions being challengeable by NGOs before the Court. While the Member States rejected a proposal by the Commission to have the finding of non-compliance against the EU rejected by the Convention's Meeting of the Parties (MoP), the resulting compromise position of the EU still represented the most damaging proposal ever to be put forward before the MoP when it convened in Montenegro in September. The EU's credibility as a proponent of democracy and the rule of law was severely damaged. It showed itself as willing to jeopardise not only the compliance mechanism but the effectiveness of the Convention itself for the sake of narrow bureaucratic interests, thereby undermining one of the key instruments for promoting democracy in the wider European and Central Asian region. Fortunately the EU was completely isolated, with not a single other Party or stakeholder supporting its position, leading to the issue being deferred to the next meeting in four years' time as the least bad option.

**But the denial of access to justice cannot continue for another four years. The Commission must now without delay prepare a legislative proposal revising the Aarhus Regulation to bring it into line with the Convention and ensure that NGOs and the public have adequate access to justice at the EU level.** Member States must ensure that it does so. The actions envisaged in the 2018 CWP to promote a 'more democratic Union' have little to do with improving the democratic accountability of the EU institutions in any way.

**The Court of Justice of the European Union must also take account of the findings of the Committee in its (the Court's) future rulings,** as the jurisprudence it has generated has been identified as part of the problem.

Only when Europeans enjoy the rights of access to justice envisaged under the Aarhus Convention in full can the EU claim to be a champion of democratic accountability and the rule of law.



**Jeremy Wates**  
Secretary General

# META

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**EEB**

European  
Environmental  
Bureau

EU's unconventional approach to environmental justice  
disappoints and dismays in equal measure.

# ACCESS DENIED

By Anton Lazarus



The Store Torv public square in the Danish city of Aarhus where the convention was adopted in 1998.

**T**he European Union has been severely criticised for failing to accept UN findings that it is in breach of international law on environmental justice.

The UN Economic Commission for Europe's Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, made up of respected, independent experts on international law, published its ruling earlier this year. It found that EU laws do not go far enough to ensure that citizens have access to the European courts to challenge environmentally sensitive decisions.

The European Union's response since the ruling was issued has astonished legal experts and campaigners alike, who point out that it undermines the EU's position as a defender of the rule of law on the international stage.

At the Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention (MoP), held in Montenegro in September, EEB Secretary General Jeremy Wates delivered a strongly-worded statement to the several hundred assembled delegates on behalf of the European ECO Forum, a coalition of environmental NGOs. The statement



pulled no punches in its criticism of the EU's position:

“The hypocrisy in the EU’s stance is palpable. Every single finding of non-compliance since the establishment of the compliance mechanism in 2002 has been endorsed [...] with the full support of the EU. [...] Only now, when the non-compliance concerns the EU itself, has the EU

seen fit to challenge the output of the Committee”

As a bloc of 28 countries, the EU has always enjoyed an automatic majority among the by now 46 voting Parties to the Convention, a position of strength which it has previously used to ensure the expert Committee’s findings of non-compliance against other countries



**“The hypocrisy in the EU’s stance is palpable. Every single finding of non-compliance since the establishment of the compliance mechanism in 2002 has been endorsed [...] with the full support of the EU. [...] Only now, when the non-compliance concerns the EU itself, has the EU seen fit to challenge the output of the Committee”**

**- European ECO Forum**

were always endorsed.

In an unprecedented move, the EU urged other parties to stop short of “endorsing” the findings against it and instead to simply “take note of” the Committee’s ruling. The Convention’s other parties were unwilling to accept this significant weakening and instead, when the EU refused to agree to any substantive change to its

position and effectively presented the other Parties with a ‘take it or leave it’ choice, opted to leave the non-compliance to be discussed again at the next meeting in 2021.

The original complaint against the EU dates back to a formal Communication from EEB member ClientEarth to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee back in 2008.

## What is the Aarhus Convention?

Adopted in 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus. Entered into force on 30 October 2001.

Enshrines important environmental rights into law, including:

- Access to information;
- Public participation in decision-making
- Access to justice

Ratified by almost 50 parties, including the EU and all 28 Member States.

A crucial tool for environmental campaigners.

Prerequisite to democratic accountability on environmental issues.

If your government knows something about the environment – you have the right to know it too!



The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee presenting their report to MOP 6 in Budva, Montenegro September 2017 Source: ODCE Presence Albania

Anaïs Berthier, the ClientEarth lawyer that filed the original complaint back in 2008 – the year the organisation’s Brussels office was opened – said:

“Providing members of the public, including NGOs, the right to challenge public authorities’ decisions before the Courts is one of the most efficient ways to ensure the correct implementation of environmental law. It’s one of the first things we did as we wanted to be able to litigate and challenge the EU’s institutions’

decisions before the Court of Justice of the EU.”

The Aarhus Convention is widely considered a remarkable achievement in international law. It grants essential rights to help deliver environmental justice. Parties to the Convention must ensure that citizens are consulted and involved in decisions that affect the environment but they must also ensure that citizens are able to challenge decisions that have already been

made.

Both the EU and its 28 Member States signed up to the Convention and committed to implement it into their legal systems. However, the European Commission argues that the EU is a unique legal entity and that because citizens could challenge decisions through their national courts, there is no need to grant direct access at the European level. This argument was rejected by the independent legal experts on the

## Timeline

**2008**

*ClientEarth file a Communication with the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee highlighting the failings of the EU’s implementation of the Convention’s requirements.*

**17 March 2017**

*The Convention’s Compliance Committee finds the EU to be failing to comply with the Convention’s requirements due to the very limited possibilities for NGOs and the public to have access to justice at the EU level*

**29 June 2017**

*In an extraordinary move, the European Commission proposes that the EU reject the Committee’s findings at the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties in Montenegro in September 2017.*

**4 July 2017**

*EEB, ClientEarth and Justice & Environment write to EU Environment Ministers to express concern about the Commission’s proposal and warn of the “devastating consequences” should it be adopted. The letter also calls for EU legislation to be adapted without delay to bring it into line with the Convention.*

compliance committee.

EEB Policy Officer Margherita Tolotto, who has spent the last years working on Aarhus implementation, said:

“If a business believes its interests or rights are being undermined by a damaging decision at the European level, they are able to challenge the injustice directly, by taking a case to the Court of Justice of the EU. There’s no reason why the same right shouldn’t be enjoyed by environmental NGOs, working on behalf of citizens and our environment – indeed, the findings of the Compliance Committee are that EU citizens should already have this right enshrined by the EU’s commitments under the Aarhus Convention.”

Environmental NGOs have been calling for greater access to justice at the European level for many years and were delighted to read the Compliance Committee’s ruling when it was delivered in March this year. The Committee published a 24-page dense legal text, which while never likely to appeal to a mass readership, represented an important milestone for all those working on the Aarhus Convention and its implementation.

Yet just when a step towards the full and correct implementation of the Convention seemed assured, and the doors to justice could finally be opened, the European Commission made a proposal that the Committee’s findings should simply be rejected.

Responding to the Commission’s initial proposal in a joint letter in July, the EEB, ClientEarth and Justice &

Environment were unequivocal about what the EU rejecting the finding of non-compliance would mean:

“It would seriously weaken the status of the Convention’s exemplary compliance mechanism, emboldening other countries in the wider region with poor human rights records to challenge the findings of the Committee when they are found in non-compliance. It would thereby severely weaken the implementation of the Convention itself, setting back almost two decades of progress in promoting environmental democracy throughout the continent of Europe and Central Asia.”

EU Ministers responded to the warning by unanimously rejecting the Commission’s proposal and instead reaching a compromise whereby the MoP would “take note” of the findings, rather than “endorse” them. However, this proposal failed to win over the other parties to the convention at the meeting in Montenegro in September. Instead, a formal decision about the EU’s non-compliance will have to wait four more years.

In the meantime NGOs will continue to fight for environmental justice and push for the full implementation of the Aarhus Convention at both national and EU level. The EU meanwhile faces serious questions about why it worked so hard to block legal rights that enforce democratic accountability and help protect the environment, and which should already be guaranteed to all Europeans.

## August 2017

*EU Ministers unanimously reject the Commission’s proposal but stop short of calling for the Compliance Committee’s findings to be endorsed. They instead decide to go to the meeting in Montenegro with the non-negotiable proposal that the MoP simply “takes note of” the findings.*

## September 2017

*After heated debate at the meeting of parties in Montenegro, the Convention’s other Parties reject the EU’s proposal as unacceptable. The resulting stand-off leads to the matter being postponed to the next session of the Meeting of the Parties in four years’ time.*

## In quotes

“Providing members of the public, including NGOs, the right to challenge public authorities’ decisions before the Courts is one of the most efficient ways to ensure the correct implementation of environmental law.

“It’s one of the first things we did as we wanted to be able to litigate and challenge the EU’s institutions’ decisions before the Court of Justice of the EU.”

**Anaïs Berthier**  
Client Earth

“If a business believes its interests or rights are being undermined by a damaging decision at the European level, they are able to challenge the injustice directly, by taking a case to the Court of Justice of the EU.

“There’s no reason why the same right shouldn’t be enjoyed by environmental NGOs, working on behalf of citizens and our environment – indeed, the findings of the Compliance Committee are that EU citizens should already have this right enshrined by the EU’s commitments under the Aarhus Convention.”

**Margherita Tolotto**  
EEB Policy Officer

# SCOTTISH AMBITION



**Roseanna Cunningham, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Environment, talks to META about climate change, Brexit and why it's our duty to future generations to protect the environment.**



BY  
EMILY MACINTOSH

**B**ack in 2009, when the Scottish government announced it would cut carbon emissions 90% by 2050, the target was lauded globally as world leading.

Eight years on and they are just months away from publishing a new set of targets. In early 2018, all eyes will be on Edinburgh when it unveils its new Climate Change Bill that will include new goals for the 2030s and 2050s.

Despite a new report from the UK government's independent Committee on Climate Change (CCC) showing that Scotland needs to do more in some sectors to stay on track to meet its climate goals into the 2030s, the Scottish government insists its clima-

te report card is an overall 'so far so good'.

When META sat down with Cabinet Secretary for Environment Roseanna Cunningham ahead of her keynote speech at the EEB Annual Conference in Edinburgh on 6 November, she was confident that Scotland is on track.

"We have met our statutory emission reduction target for the second successive year and are well on track to meet our world-leading 2020 target. The most recent emission statistics show that amongst the EU-15 countries, only Sweden and Finland have done better than Scotland."

But the Cabinet Secretary didn't shy away from the task ahead.



View of Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh, Scotland

"There are areas where even more needs to be done in order to continue meeting our ambitious targets and to prepare for greater future ambition under our proposed Climate Change Bill."

The Cabinet Secretary says that the new Scottish long-term climate targets will essentially be Scotland's official response to the 2015 Paris Agreement, which she points out is something the UK government has yet to come up with.

But how ambitious will the new targets be? Some NGOs in Scotland have called on the Scottish Government to go for a zero emissions target by 2050. Calls echoed by Manuel Pulgar Vidal, the former Peruvian environment minister that chaired the 2014 UN Climate Conference in Lima.

"The Plan, together with our Energy Strategy and new Climate Change Bill,



Meeting between Roseanna Cunningham and representatives of the Green 10 in Brussels last month.

will deliver a low-carbon transition for Scotland, which promotes social inclusion and sustainable growth. The Climate Change Plan sets out real, on the ground changes to achieve Scotland's ambitious climate targets. It is being developed to meet these targets in a realistic and workable way."

As the woman in charge of environmental protection in Scotland, beyond the Climate Change Bill, Brexit is of course an omnipresent item in Roseanna Cunningham's in-tray.

The Scottish government has led a high profile charm offensive since the vote to leave the European Union on 23 June 2016 to show to other EU governments that Scotland is committed to the European project and the protections it affords, including when it comes to the environment.

"The policies of the EU have driven up environmental standards, supported by sound and important ideals such as the 'polluter pays' principle that are fundamental to a fair and equitable approach to protecting our environment and mitigating against climate change. Around 80% of our environmental legislation derives from the EU, which has been vital in supporting our ambitious environmental and climate change policies. The Scottish Government believes we should remain in EU. If that is not possible, we must remain within the single market and customs union, which is clearly in the best interests of our economy, environment and society."

A main priority for the Scottish Government is unsurprisingly staying

off a post-Brexit Westminster-power grab and it is adamant that powers over the environment are returned to the Scottish Parliament.

"Devolution has allowed for ambitious and distinctive policy responses, including in relation to environment policy, over the last two decades. Environmental policy is largely devolved, so EU competence in this area must return to the Scottish Parliament, in line with the current devolution settlement. Any moves to impose new constraints on devolved competences are entirely unacceptable. There may be a need for a common UK approach in some areas, in the absence of EU rules, but these are matters for discussion and agreement, not imposition. In the event of Brexit we will seek, at the very least, to maintain compliance with EU standards. We recognise that there will be issues of compliance, monitoring and enforcement to be addressed and are interested in having an open dialogue about the best resolution, including where this may involve continued participation in EU programmes. Importantly, powers over the environment must be returned to the Scottish Parliament."

But for Roseanna Cunningham protecting the environment is not just political – it's personal too.

"Why does environmental protection matter? There are so many reasons to protect our environment. But for me, this is fundamentally about stewardship. We have a duty to protect our environment for its inherent value and also because future generations deserve nothing less."

# Not too moderate moderator

EEB Conference Moderator Lesley Riddoch has a strong background in activism on social and environmental issues. Here she talks to Emily Macintosh.

Journalist Lesley Riddoch has been at the forefront of Scottish journalism, politics, and activism throughout her career.

A prominent voice in both print and broadcast media, Riddoch has also broadened her remit, establishing both her own media production company and a think tank called 'Nordic Horizons' which explores how 'nordic models' could apply to Scotland.

When it comes to Brexit, for Riddoch, the environment has been conspicuous by its absence. She says that the absence of a "proper discussion about how environmental legislation has grown with the EU and where that will leave Britain if Brexit goes ahead" is stark.

For Riddoch, the EEB annual

conference in Edinburgh is a vital and timely way to get the issue up the political agenda in both Holyrood and Westminster. Riddoch fears the environment, a matter devolved to the Scottish Parliament, could be victim to what she describes as the "catch-all grab going on in

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*"People have led politicians in almost all the important advances"*

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Westminster". She is also vocal in her critique of the UK government's lack of "strong and consistent support for the environment" and its "one-sized fits all" approach to Brexit in the UK.

Riddoch was a prominent voice campaigning for a 'Yes' vote during Scotland's historic 2014 independence referendum, and in the mid-nineties she was a founding member of the Isle of Eigg Trust, the body that owns and runs the island after a successful 1997 community buyout.

For Riddoch, who is most drawn to "incredible natural habitats but also places with people in them", in these uncertain political times it is still people power that inspires her as "people have led politicians in almost all the important advances".

And as for journalism, Riddoch is both worried by media trends such as "newspapers teetering on the brink", but at the same time hopeful about the "vibrancy" found online.

## Community power on the Isle of Eigg

Ten miles off Scotland's west coast lies the Isle of Eigg, an 8 kilometre long and 5 kilometre wide island teeming with wildlife and landscapes just as exceptional as its history and people.

In 1997, Eigg's inhabitants successfully fundraised £1.5 million for a community buyout of their island, ending 169 years of successive absentee owners who had left the

island's infrastructure crumbling.

20 years on from the buyout and the island is flourishing. The population has increased by 60% (now at 105) and the island is owned and managed by the Isle of Eigg Trust which is made up of three bodies: the Isle of Eigg Residents' Association, the Highland Council and The Scottish Wildlife Trust.

The Trust has overseen the provision of better housing, the restructuring of croft land, the establishment of a waste collection service, better forestry management to bring back wildlife-friendly trees, and, the establishment of 'Eigg Electric' the island's own renewable company that uses a mix of wind, solar, and wave

energy to power the homes and businesses on Eigg.

How to avoid communities being left with no other option but to raise astronomical amounts of money to buy their way out of an arguably feudal system of land ownership is still a topical issue in Scotland, and land reform remains on the political agenda.

With Brexit looming, the islanders are seeking assurances from both the Scottish and UK governments that the EU funding that has been instrumental in supporting development on the island will be matched with other schemes. It was EU grants that funded the island's refurbished pier and community hall, for example, and farmers on the island rely on farm subsidies.

But whatever the future brings, the islanders on Eigg have shown that sustainable development can lead to the social and environmental renaissance of a community, whether it be rural or urban, big or small.





# Step back from the coalface

As a Europe-wide campaign launches to take Europe Beyond Coal, Italy joins the growing list of countries committed to phasing out this dirty fuel.

By Mauro Anastasio



**T**he journey to a coal free Europe is one step closer after Italy joined the growing list of countries that have promised to phase out coal in the coming years.

The announcement from the Italian government that all its coal plants will close by 2025 mirrors similar commitments by Portugal, Finland, France, the Netherlands and the UK.

Christian Schaible, Senior Policy Officer for Industrial Emissions at the European Environmental Bureau, said:

“Closing coal power plants is not just an important step towards reducing CO2 emissions, it’s also crucial to reduce the health-harming air pollution that’s suffocating our cities. After the announcement in Italy, attention turns to the last coal-burning countries in Europe, especially Germany.”

Italy’s commitment came just a week ahead of the launch of ‘Europe Beyond Coal’, a new alliance of groups concerned about the impact of Europe’s dirtiest fuel on people’s health, the climate, and the environment.

Europe Beyond Coal will work with concerned citizens, national and regional authorities, businesses, banks and investors to speed up coal plant closures and redirect investments towards renewable

energy.

At the launch of the campaign at a major climate march in Bonn, campaign director Kathrin Gutmann said:

“Momentum is building for Europe to be coal free by 2030, and we’re coming together to make it happen, and happen sooner.”

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*“A total coal phase out is inevitable, but the sooner this happens the more people will be spared the risk of preventable illness and premature death.”*

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New research released by the campaign reveals the extent of damage caused by EU coal plants, which include an estimated 19,500 premature deaths and 41,000 cases of chronic bronchitis in children every year.

The economic costs are equally alarming, with taxpayers left to pick up the bill. Related health costs now currently amount to over €54 billion a year. Doctors and scientists have warned that support for coal in one

country is a health and climate risk for all.

Europe Beyond Coal will track existing and planned coal plants and model their impacts using official data. It will present the facts to concerned citizens, national and regional decision makers, energy companies, banks and investors in order to facilitate a move away from coal and into clean renewable energy.

At the core of its strategy is support for communities in the transition to healthier lives, cleaner air, cheaper electricity and new, green jobs. The campaign is urging all EU governments to put forward concrete plans to phase out coal before the 2018 international climate meeting in Katowice, Poland.

A similar sister campaign by the Sierra Club in the US has been running for years, and has led to 262 announced coal plant closures so far, progress which has continued in spite of the Trump administration’s pro-coal agenda.

The EEB has already been playing a central role in the build up to the public launch of Europe Beyond Coal, providing expert technical advice and working closely with partners including Greenpeace, WWF, CAN, HEAL and ClientEarth.

You can find more information about Europe Beyond Coal at [www.beyond-coal.eu](http://www.beyond-coal.eu).

**After serving 12 years at the EEB, EU Policy Director Pieter De Pous is leaving to take up a role at the German environmental NGO NABU. Here Pieter reflects on his time in Brussels and sees reasons to be positive.**

# A case for Environmental Optimism

By Pieter De Pous



**W**e are living again through interesting times. Whereas at the start of my time at the EEB the EU was still able to take important steps with the adoption of first ever waste recycling targets, the adoption of REACH, the Water Framework Directive and proposals for an entirely new policy area, soil protection, for the most part of my 12 years at the EEB environmentalists have often found themselves in a defensive position. This became particularly so in the aftermath of the near-catastrophic bursting of a US housing bubble in 2007, the election in 2014 of a record number of nativist political groups in the European Parliament and the way the Juncker Commission decided to respond to that.

At the same time, the consequences of a failure to avoid the kind of changes in climate and ecosystems that we are heading towards are, with every record breaking heatwave, fire, hurricane or flood, manifesting themselves more clearly as the kind of existential threat that makes previous collapses in human history look like a minor incident.

Sounds like we're doomed then? Perhaps not. Protecting the environment at the end of the day means social change, and people are

notoriously reluctant to change their habits. We should not be surprised that change is going slowly. But 40 years of EU, national, regional and global policy developments have already set in motion a process that I think is ultimately irreversible. Almost the entire political debate about environmental protection, at least in the EU, is about how to achieve our goals and who should pay, not whether we should be doing it at all.

Secondly, looking beyond the state of the environment, the world is actually doing incredibly well on most accounts as scientists like Max Roser and the late Hans Rosling never tire to point out. Never before in human history, for example, have so many people lived in peace, with access to education, sanitation and healthcare. The last decades in particular have seen a dramatic drop in early childhood deaths and the share of the world population living in extreme poverty has dropped to almost 10%. And population growth is projected to stabilise between 9 and 11 billion people with 2 children families having become the norm in most parts of the world by now.

The technological developments in particular in solar energy are another cause for optimism. For the first time in our history we are making ourselves independent from

photosynthesis (whether in the form of wood or fossil energy) by gathering energy from the sun directly with very significant efficiency gains. And thanks to past policies, investments and support mechanisms, the technology is rapidly becoming competitive rendering the argument of nuclear or fossil energy forms being cheap and reliable as obsolete. Likewise, energy efficiency policies and measures are now driving a transformation of business models in the energy sectors, away from selling kWh to becoming an energy service provider. Iconic wildlife, such as cranes, beavers, wolves and elk, are making a comeback across Europe thanks to being protected under EU law. River restoration where it takes place is showing spectacular results and improving flood safety in the process.

In short, we are looking at a world with a stabilising population, which is becoming better educated, more prosperous and that is constantly developing new and better technologies and even habits. Whereas only 4 years ago German Greens met outrage when proposing a 'veggie day', now a German Agriculture Minister is met with ridicule for complaining about vegetarian schnitzels. Vegan foods are rapidly becoming mainstream.



The Eurasian Wolf Credit: Tom Bech

And the part of the world that still has the biggest impact on the environment and the biggest historic responsibility, Europe, has an ambitious comprehensive set of policies in place that seek to reduce its ecological footprint, protect and restore its degraded ecosystems, move to a clean, efficient energy system. What's more, being the world's largest consumer market, the EU functions as a de-facto global standard setter. A role, incidentally, that it was prepared to give up during the negotiations with the US on TTIP.

The point I'm making here is not that we should relax but that the problems we are facing are, in principle, solvable. Provided of course that we keep our eye on the ball, focus on these very real problems we have and, most importantly, remind ourselves every day that timing is everything.

To start off with perhaps the biggest distraction right now, the notion that we are facing a 'populist revolt'. This is nonsense. What is happening is a fierce and well funded push back by a handful of extremely wealthy, elderly men who have resorted to some of the oldest, ugliest tactics of whipping up a crowd with extremist ideologies in order to delay a change that they consider is threatening their privileged position

and/or income. There is no doubt that by doing so they can do serious damage, as we are seeing right now with Brexit being promoted as an opportunity for deregulating environmental protections, how Trump is waging a war against environmental protections in the US or how our oil consumption is funding the spread of extremist Islam and associated terror. There can also be no doubt however that these old men are putting up a losing fight.

Having spent the last 3 years persuading the Juncker Commission that environmental protection should not be seen as a liability to the EU, to be thrown under the bus in a misguided effort to appease anti-EU groups who combine their dislike of the EU with a dislike for environmental protection, we are now finally at a point where the EU has a chance to concentrate its energy and efforts to address the single biggest actual threat that it is facing. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement provide it with the guarantee that it won't even need to do so alone. The next years are going to be decisive. And I'm looking forward to continue to be part of the effort at an NGO, NABU, in a country, Germany, that will be playing a crucial role in all of this.

## Good luck Pieter!

by Jeremy Wates

The EEB's longstanding EU Policy Director Pieter de Pous is leaving the EEB in October to take up the post of Head of Conservation and Environmental Policy with our member organization NABU in Germany.

Pieter served for the past seven years as EU Policy Director, overseeing our advocacy work on the full range of EU policies, leading and building a highly motivated team. Before that he worked for five years first as a policy officer then as a senior policy officer on issues such as agriculture, water, nature and bioenergy.

A true green warrior, Pieter excels in the midst of battle (he himself has a certain fondness for military metaphors). So when Juncker declared war on the environment with the unveiling of his ten largely environment-free, sustainability-free priorities and mission letters at the start of his Commission Presidency, Pieter played a central role in formulating a G10 response and organising the pushback. He has also been pivotal to the EEB's collaboration not only with the EU institutions but also with many partner organisations such as ECOS (where he has served as Chair of the Board for many years), Seas At Risk, Green Budget Europe and BEUC to mention a few. He also served on or provided support to various expert groups, most recently the Commission's TTIP Advisory Group.

Pieter's clear analysis, sharp wit and easygoing manner will be sorely missed in the EEB office and more generally in the Brussels scene.

At the same time, we are glad that he will remain part of the larger EEB family and wish him and Cordula and their children the very best with their move to Berlin and the start of a new phase in their lives.

# A round-up of environmental news over the last three months

These stories and more are available on the new EEB news channel METAmag.org



## LEAKED PAPER OUTLINES COMMISSION'S STRATEGY TO CURB SINGLE USE PLASTIC

EU POLICY-MAKERS are considering introducing laws to curb single use of plastics such as plastic cups and certain packaging, according to a leaked document seen by the EEB.

The draft strategy, published in Politico, reveals that the European Commission is pushing for measures to reduce use of throw-away plastics and increase plastic reuse and recycling.

The environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution can no longer be ignored. Read more on METAmag.org.



## GLYPHOSATE DECISION IN DEADLOCK

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION failed to garner enough support from EU governments for renewing glyphosate's licence and postponed a vote on the matter.

Twelve countries reportedly said that they would oppose or abstain in a vote on the controversial weedkiller from agro-chemical company Monsanto, meaning the Commission would not have met the qualified majority threshold required to push through its proposal if a vote had taken place. Read more on METAmag.org.

## Opinion

### MEMBER STATES HAVE NO REAL PLAN FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY, THEY ARE SECRETLY SABOTAGING IT



**Piotr BARCZAK**  
Policy Officer: Waste European Environmental Bureau

IT'S HIGH TIME for a circular economy in Europe, according to member states. So why are they on course to obstruct waste laws? This kind of double-speak undermines the circular economy but also faith in politicians, writes Piotr Barczak. Piotr Barczak is waste policy officer at the European Environmental

Bureau (EEB).

The circular economy, where waste is prevented and products reused or recycled, has now entered the mainstream of the political agenda across Europe. Read more on METAmag.org.

## SWITZERLAND MUST ENACT FULL MERCURY EXPORT BAN SAY ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

FIFTY ENVIRONMENTAL groups are calling on Switzerland to match their words with action by fully banning mercury exports.

Just weeks after Switzerland held the first COP of the Minamata Convention on mercury they are considering continuing to export the dangerous neurotoxin for some allowed uses. Read more on METAmag.org.

## FEARS OVER THE INFLUENCE OF CHEMICALS INDUSTRY ON NEW RULES FOR CANCER LINKED CHEMICALS



THE EU has come under criticism for hiring an industry consultancy to develop recommendations and exemptions for the cancer linked chemical, PFOA.

The company BiPRO was subcontracted for this technical work despite having a client list which includes many major chemical companies who make or use the substance PFOA.

The chemical, which is used in the production of Teflon, accumulates in the human body and has been linked to thyroid disease, testicular cancer, kidney cancer and pregnancy induced hypertension. Read more on METAmag.org.

## A GROWING NUMBER OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS DEMAND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS



CHEAP PRICES are no longer the only driver for consumers. A growing number of Europeans are demanding information about the origin of the products they consume.

Last month a petition was delivered to the European Commission calling on the EU to support a UN treaty which will bring greater fairness to international trade.

The European Environmental Bureau's (EEB) 'Justice for My Cookies' campaign highlighted the use of palm oil in foods and the negative impact it has on people and the environment. Read more on METAmag.org.

## CHEAP FASHION'S ENVIRONMENTAL COST IN THE SPOTLIGHT



The textile industry's environmental impact is facing scrutiny as representatives from European governments, industry and NGOs start reviewing the environmental standards that aim to curb pollution from textile production processes – eight years after talks were supposed to start. More on METAmag.org.



## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BACKS PLAN TO LIMIT CARCINOGEN IN FERTILISERS

MEPS VOTED to limit the amount of cadmium – a toxic carcinogen – sold in fertiliser products across Europe in October. They supported a Commission proposal to reduce cadmium levels in fertilisers to 20mg/kg.

Environmental contamination from cadmium-rich mineral fertilisers also has implications for human health when the carcinogenic heavy metal makes its way into the crops that grow food and animal feed.

While reducing cadmium pollution from other sectors in the EU has been largely successful, farming remains the last major bastion of cadmium exposure, with waterways and soil bearing the brunt of cadmium pollution. Read more on METAmag.org.



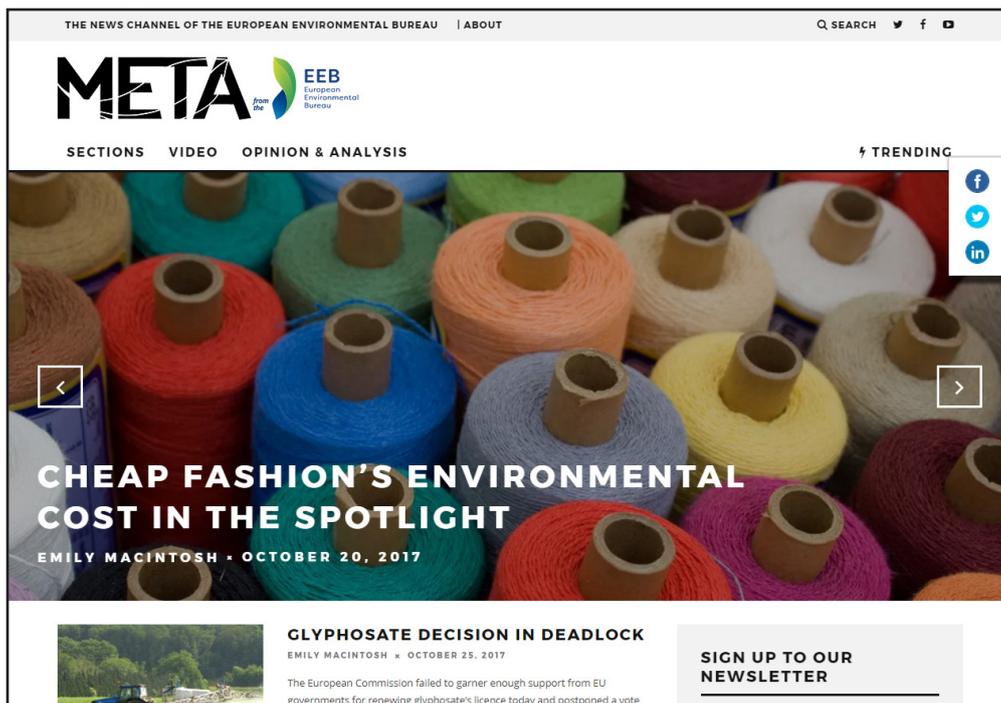
## FARMING UNDER FIRE FOR POOR AIR QUALITY

New evidence that Europe's air quality is sub par has been published by the EU's own environment agency. The study reveals that over 400,000 Europeans die every year as a result of air pollution.



## HYDROPOWER THREATENS ROMANIAN RIVER

One of Europe's last wildernesses in Romania is under threat from a damaging hydropower project that was given the go ahead way back in 2002 – before the country's nature was protected by the EU environmental laws.



## New META website and branding

We are happy to announce that the EEB have launched a new online version of META. You can now find all the stories from our print magazine online at METAmag.org (see screenshot).

Following the rebrand of the EEB earlier this year we are also using this time to reboot the design of the META logo. The new logo uses the leaf motif of the EEB logo.

We will also be communicating much more frequently through our weekly email newsletter.

## Coming and going

### Leaving the EEB

#### Pieter De Pous

After 12 years with the EEB, Pieter is leaving his role as EU Policy Director to take up the role of Head of Conservation and Environmental Policy at German NGO NABU.

#### Kristina Simonaityte

Kristina was working as Digital Communication Assistant with the EEB. She has left to take up a position with the Lithuanian civil service.

#### Justine Bichon

Justine recently finished up an internship at the EEB in the Agriculture policy area. She is continuing her studies in Paris.

#### Burag Gurden

Having completed an internship with the EEB's Global Policies and Sustainability team, Burag is returning to his studies in Lund, Sweden.

### Joining the EEB

#### Kasia Tusiewicz

Kasia has joined the EEB as Project Coordinator for the Make Europe Sustainable for All project.

#### Carmen Benner

Carmen has joined the EEB as Project Finance Officer.

#### Marie-Amélie Brun

Working with the EEB Communications Team, Marie-Amélie is the new Digital Communications Assistant.

#### Alejandro Criado Monleon

Alejandro has taken up an internship with the EEB working in the areas of water and agriculture.

#### Stephan Piskol

Stephan has joined the EEB as Climate and Agriculture Project Assistant.

#### Ivo Lammertink

Ivo has started an internship in the area of energy and climate.

## About us

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is the largest network of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe with around 140 member organisations from over 30 countries. The EEB is an International non-profit association / Association internationale sans but lucratif (AISBL).  
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