

META



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CALLING TIME ON COAL

We highlight the countries taking the lead and those falling behind when it comes to phasing out coal.

ANTIBIOTICS UNDER THREAT

Is pharmaceutical pollution contributing to the end of life-saving antibiotics?

A BETTER EUROPE FOR ALL

EEB's Patrizia Heidegger explains how mainstreaming sustainable development can pave the way to a better future.

A newly published EU strategy is waging war on single-use plastic items. But will it be enough to end Europe's

THROWAWAY CULTURE?

We look at what has been proposed by the Commission to see if it will be enough to tackle the plastic pollution crisis.

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Graphic: IC

EDITORIAL**FINDING OUR WAY OUT OF EUROPE'S PLASTIC POLLUTION CRISIS**

2018 should be remembered as the year civil society stood up to counter the irreversible consequences of plastic pollution in our environment.

Once known as an innovative material, plastic has become the symbol of our throw-away society and has been linked to several major problems including marine litter and the collapse of entire ecosystems.

In January, all eyes were on the European Commission when it released Europe's first-ever strategy targeting single-use plastic items and vowed to make all plastic packaging recyclable or reusable by 2030.

Environmental groups have welcomed the initiative, but point out that without concrete and legally-binding measures the plan remains wishful thinking.

And so EU policy makers are now tasked with coming up with a combination of laws to overcome the plastic pollution crisis.

The EEB, along with members of the Rethink Plastic campaign, will work to ensure Europe shows the highest ambition for the sake of the environment and future generations.

Avoid unnecessary, disposable plastic items

The best way to deal with waste is not to produce it in the first place. That means in the first instance considering whether plastic is the best material for the job, when its environmental footprint is taken into account.

We also need to avoid packaging solutions and single-use items when possible.

The EU has already imposed a phase-out of plastic bags by 2019. Countries like Ireland have successfully introduced mandatory charging to discourage people from using them. Similar approaches should be extended to other disposable items.

Make plastic responsible by design

All plastic should be made responsible by design so that only long-lasting, recyclable and toxic-free plastic items are put on the market.

Under extended producer responsibility schemes, whereby the price of a product includes a fee to cover the costs of its eventual responsible disposal, producers (and ultimately consumers) should pay fees reflecting the environmental impact of products: the more durable and recyclable the material, the lower the fee.

Design is also important to ensure that hazardous substances are kept out of products – something that may hinder efforts to recycle and recover materials safely.

Better management of plastic waste

Producers, retailers and municipalities need to step up efforts to achieve maximum collection and recycling of plastic waste.

Separate collection of plastic waste is one of the key enablers of recycling. But tonnes of unsorted and uncollected plastic items still leak into our environment every day.

Producers should help by taking on the financial responsibility for the collection and recycling of all plastic.

Consumer behaviour around plastic waste should be rewarded or penalised as appropriate. Waste collection fees paid by households should be based on the quality of separation as well as weight or volume of the waste generated, rather than on a fixed charge.

Similarly, through deposit-refund schemes, consumers can pay a small deposit which will be refunded when the reusable and recyclable packaging is returned.

Closing the loop of our economy

EU institutions and governments can choose from a wide range of policy instruments to reduce plastic pollution.

This will in turn make Europe less dependent on finite resources. It will pave the way to a circular economy, in which increasing recycling and reuse operations can create jobs, save people money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We are already moving in that direction. All it takes is the willingness to speed up the transition.



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Secretary General

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Setting a path to counter throwaway culture

EUROPE GETS SET TO RETHINK PLASTIC



By Mauro Anastasio

A newly published EU strategy is waging war on single-use plastic items. But will it be enough to end Europe's plastic pollution crisis? The European Commission unveiled its first-ever strategy to cut down on the wasteful consumption of plastic and curb marine litter earlier this year.

EU officials promised that they will release new draft laws in May to reduce single-use plastic items that are generally used for less than five minutes, but can stay in the environment for centuries.

Rather than suggesting an outright ban, the strategy proposed reduction targets and levies on certain disposable items as well as requirements to make all plastic packaging reusable and recyclable.

The European Commission is also expected to implement measures to restrict the use of plastic particles in cosmetics and detergents, which can be found in most of the fish we eat, and fix labels for biodegradable and compostable plastics.

The European Commission said in a statement that the new strategy "[...] will transform the way

plastic products are designed, used, produced and recycled in the EU. Better design of plastic products, higher plastic waste recycling rates, and more and better quality recyclates will help boost the market for recycled plastics."

"Our seas are choking on plastic. We are close to a point of no return, meaning it's time for governments and businesses to face reality."

*- Carsten Wachholz
Senior Policy Officer EEB*

Europe's commitment follows an unprecedented, albeit toothless, resolution by the UN in December to end plastic pollution. In Europe, the UK is also examining the possibility of introducing levies to discourage the use of unnecessary plastics.

NGOs welcomed the initiative but also highlighted the lack of concrete actions and vague language used at this stage.

Carsten Wachholz, Senior Policy Officer at the EEB, added: "We welcome the initiative, but the

European Commission must now come up with laws to reduce the availability of throwaway plastic items, make packaging reusable and easily recyclable, and restrict the use of microplastics."

The numbers: almost 50% of beach litter is single-use plastic

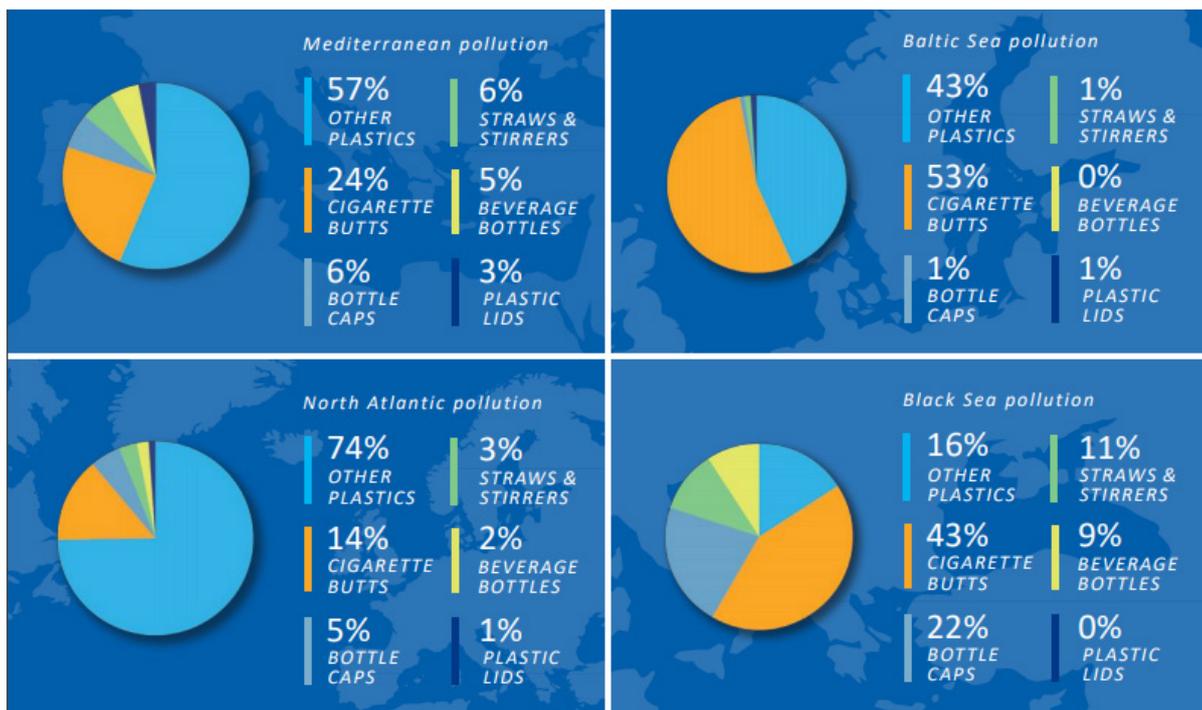
EU countries dump more than 100,000 tonnes of plastic into the sea every year, of which almost 50% is single-use items.

Bottles, straws, throwaway packaging and cigarette butts are the most littered items polluting our seas.

Recent studies suggested that increasing plastic production over the past four decades may have contributed to the current levels of pollution.

Plastic production has steadily increased since the 1950s, with the exception of 2007 and 2008 following the economic crisis.

Yet despite the growing demand, according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation only 5% of plastic waste was recycled effectively world-wide in 2013, while 40% was buried and a third was littered.



Source: Seas at Risk and Eunomia Consulting & Research (2017).

Now industry projections estimate that global plastic production will double by 2035 and quadruple by 2050.

A 2016 report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation warned that there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050 if governments don't take immediate action.

The European Commission is aware that plastic pollution can also cause serious economic damage, especially with regard to losses for coastal communities, tourism, shipping and fishing.

An impact assessment suggests that the potential cost across the EU for coastal and beach cleaning would stand at €630 million per year, while the cost to the fishing industry could amount to almost €60 million.

The Chinese waste import ban: Challenge or opportunity?

Meanwhile, a ban on imports of plastic scraps by the Chinese government could be a timely game-changer for EU countries.

The EU used to ship 60% of plastics collected for recycling to China before the country banned imports of several waste streams

starting from January 2018.

According to data obtained by Greenpeace, the UK alone has exported over 1.5 million tonnes of plastic scraps to China since 2012.

Green groups warned that restrictions may see an end to collection of some plastic in the UK and increase the risk of environmental pollution due to limited capacity of recycling facilities.

"Whatever happens we need to maintain control of the material because the bigger worry is about leakage of plastic into the environment," Stuart Foster from Recoup told the Guardian.

But others believe the ban should be seen as an opportunity.

Piotr Barczak, waste policy officer at the EEB, said that the ban adds momentum to measures aimed at reducing waste generation and boosting recycling operations at home.

Of a similar opinion was the European Commission's Vice-President Frans Timmermans. "The Chinese decision is undoubtedly a big challenge but let's turn that challenge into an opportunity," he said at a press conference in Strasbourg while

unveiling Europe's strategy to curb plastic pollution.

Towards a circular economy

The EU Plastics Strategy is expected to facilitate Europe's transition towards a circular economy, where waste is prevented and products are designed to be reused or recycled.

As part of a new set of EU waste laws, member states agreed in December to increase to 55% by 2035 the next target for plastic recycling, which currently stands at 30% by 2020.

The new laws include provisions allowing governments to restrict the use of disposable plastics without facing legal action – something that held back a plastic bag ban in France two years ago.

Increasing public support for the circular economy may have helped secure a more ambitious approach in Europe.

According to a recent EU survey, 71% of respondents have taken action to reduce and recycle waste, while 56% made an effort to cut down on disposable items such as plastic bags and excessive packaging.

THE MILLION YEAR OLD FUEL THAT'S BEST BEFORE 2030



BY
ANTON LAZARUS

Anton Lazarus digs into the campaign to take Europe beyond coal

Visitors to the recently-launched Europe Beyond Coal website are greeted by a short and simple sentence: Europe will be coal free by 2030.

It's a clever one-liner: part assertion, part prediction and part demand, and it suits a campaign that is comfortable in the knowledge that its core aim is not just essential, but inevitable.

Repeating what has become an unofficial motto, Europe Beyond Coal Campaign Director Kathrin Gutmann told META:

"Europe will be coal free by 2030. Accepting this and planning for it will create the certainty business and communities need to move confidently forward to a better Europe for everyone."

What Gutmann means by a better Europe for everyone is clear: a fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions in the EU come from coal and coal power stations are the single biggest sources of health-harming air pollution in Europe, linked by recent studies to more than 20,000 premature deaths every year.

Replacing coal-fired electricity generation with sustainable renewables and reducing overall demand for energy by cutting waste are the most effective routes to

control emissions.

Experts agree that if Europe is to have any chance of meeting its Paris climate commitments, its last coal-fired power plant must close before 2030.

With the health, environmental and climate benefits of moving away from coal established, fixing national deadlines for phasing out coal has become a key pillar of the Europe Beyond Coal campaign.

Explicit national coal phase out deadlines are not just important to ensure governments stick to their Paris commitments, they also send clear messages to markets and investors about the need to shift money away from coal and towards socially and environmentally acceptable sources of energy.

Country-level deadlines for retiring plants can also help those often forgotten during times of economic transition – the people whose livelihoods will be affected. Knowing when a plant will close allows for proper planning for a future without coal, something that is often very hard to imagine for people in regions where the coal industry has been an integral part of life for generations.

Those working on the campaign do not underestimate the challenge, and accept that the situation varies

from country to country.

As Gutmann put it:

"Every country's national situation is different, but we know coal must be phased out everywhere, and soon. Setting end dates for coal now ensures a managed transition will happen, and happen in the most economical and socially just way."

For some countries that transition has already happened.

In Belgium, the last coal power station in the eastern Flemish city of Genk closed in 2016. A former mine in the city has been reopened as a visitor and events centre and tourists are invited to walk heritage routes to learn about the industry's history in the area.

Other countries have recently announced national phase out dates, including France (2022), Italy and the UK (2025) and Portugal, Finland and the Netherlands (2030).

Yet major coal-burning countries including Germany, Poland, Spain and the Czech Republic are yet to make any commitments.

You can find out more about Europe Beyond Coal and more information about the impacts of coal in your country at www.beyond-coal.eu. If you are interested in the EEB's work on coal and industry you can contact Christian Schaible: christian.schaible@eeb.org.

The UK (2025)

The UK has taken an international lead on phasing out coal. It launched the 'Powering Past Coal' alliance together with Canada at the COP23 meeting in Bonn, Germany last year. However, while the UK has seen a dramatic decline in coal, its plants are some of the oldest and most polluting in Europe and still receive millions of pounds of capacity payment subsidies from the government. Sam Bright of ClientEarth told META that the 2025 deadline is "far too late" and questioned whether the UK could really claim to have promised a "national phase out" while excluding the Kilroot plant in Northern Ireland from its plans.

Germany

German plants are responsible for 38% of all CO2 emissions from coal in the EU. The government's failure to commit to phasing out coal was an embarrassment for the country at the COP23 climate summit held in Bonn last November. Following the September 2017 German elections, the political parties negotiating to form the next government promised to set a national phase out date before the end of 2018. Campaigners in Germany say this date needs to be set well-ahead of 2030.

The Netherlands (2030)

Perhaps the most ambitious coal phase out commitment has come from the Netherlands. The Dutch government has promised to close all coal plants by 2030 at the latest – despite some of them having only been put into service in the last few years. Nevertheless, Geertje van Hooijdonk from Natuur & Milieu told META that alongside a rapid Dutch phase out: "a Europe-wide stance against coal is crucial as well". She said: "Together we can make the shift to a clean, interconnected energy supply of wind and solar power."

Poland

Polish coal plants pump more health-harming emissions into European air than any other country and will struggle to meet new EU standards. Poland is also still building new coal power stations and the current government is stubbornly supporting coal while market forces shift against it.

France (2022)

France has just a handful of coal-fired power stations, which President Macron has promised to close in the next four years.

Spain

Spain has a lot of catching up to do; despite having massive overcapacity in its electricity network, and huge potential for renewable generation, the Spanish government remains stubbornly opposed to plant closures. What's worse, a Royal Decree issued late last year banned operators from closing their coal power stations. Ana Barreira of Spanish environmental law group IIDMA said the decision "made no sense at a time when Spain is also working on developing a Climate Change and energy law". IIDMA also questioned the legality of the Degree. More info: www.iidma.org



ERA OF LIFE-SAVING ANTIBIOTICS COULD BE OVER

IF PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE IS NOT TACKLED

Pharmaceutical pollution is contributing to the end of life-saving antibiotics. Despite this a senior European Commission official revealed last month that a much-anticipated EU strategy document on the topic won't contain any new draft laws.



BY
EMILY MACINTOSH

Pollution from pharmaceutical plants is leading to the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and this in turn could see more and more people dying from previously treatable diseases.

A recent report for the British government claimed that if nothing is done the annual number of deaths globally from AMR could rise from 700,000 to 10 million in the next 35 years.

The comments from the Commission official followed new evidence published by the foundation Changing Markets which revealed widespread heavy metal and solvent contamination at factories in Hyderabad, India – a major drug manufacturing hub that

produces every tenth tablet sold globally.

Speaking at 'Joining the Dots', an event on antimicrobial resistance and pharmaceutical pollution held in the European Parliament on Tuesday 30 January, Hans Stielstra from DG Environment said that the Commission's strategy document – set to be published in May – wouldn't contain any legislative proposals but that it would look at "all policy options that seem feasible".

Stielstra, who works on clean water issues, said the Commission was considering measures throughout the product's lifecycle from dealing with the problem at the manufacturing stage to 'end of pipe' solutions such as additional measures at waste water treatment plants. He added:



Polluted waterbody at Bollaram industrial area, India (Credit: Nordea)

“We’ll review all policy options all the way from design to final disposal or even reuse where that is possible.”

But Dutch MEP Annie Schreijer-Pierik called for the Commission to put forward legislative proposals to regulate the problem and tackle the consequences of drugs manufacturing and use. She said that the European Parliament has been “waiting in vain” for a strategy on pharmaceutical pollution.

Leonardo Mazza, Senior Policy Officer for Biodiversity and Water at the European Environmental Bureau, pointed to the Commission’s own study from 2013 that demonstrated the need to further regulate pharmaceuticals. He said that “too little had happened” since the study.

Mazza said: “There is plenty of evidence that Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) in the environment pose serious risks to our health and environment. It is an existing well-documented problem without a satisfactory response at EU level. APIs remain the only group of chemicals whose environmental impacts remain largely unregulated at EU level. We need an ambitious and effective regulatory response to be swiftly proposed by the Commission.”

100,000 tonnes of pharmaceutical products are produced globally every year, and while these medicines help to save lives and prevent disease they cause environmental damage both at the manufacturing stage and when they are excreted by patients through sinks and toilets. With wastewater

treatment plants for the most part not adequately equipped to filter pharmaceuticals out, medicines end up having unintended consequences when they come into contact with aquatic life.

Recent research from the CHEM Trust showed that human and veterinary medicines are damaging wildlife by polluting rivers and harming wild birds and fish.

As a result of excess amounts of antibiotics used — particularly in intensive livestock farming — and the associated spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria in the environment, the effectiveness of antibiotics is declining. Medical experts warn that if antimicrobial resistance is not dealt with it could undermine the medical gains of the past century.

Dr Christoph Lübbert from the University of Leipzig said that we are “in danger of falling back into a pre-antibiotic era”.

The European Commission recently published its ‘One Health Action Plan against antimicrobial resistance’ strategy and it has started talks with EU governments and MEPs on new laws on the use of drugs in farm animals. The use of antibiotics in livestock has skyrocketed in recent years, and is a major contributing factor to the rise of AMR globally.

However, Nina Renshaw, Secretary General of the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), described the Commission’s AMR strategy as “ineffective”. She said it was essential to take on the issues of AMR and

pharmaceutical pollution together — particularly given the significant “period of inaction” on the two issues.

She said: “Scenarios show that if AMR is not tackled it could cause 10 million deaths a year globally by 2050 and could be a bigger killer than cancer. Routine medical procedures that we count on antibiotics to do will be more dangerous.”

Renshaw added that producers have a responsibility for the products they put on the market. She said:

“In line with the polluter pays principle it should be the pharmaceutical sector that bears the cost of introducing these excess pharmaceuticals into the environment.”

Lucas Wiarda, Head of Sustainable Antibiotics Programme at pharmaceutical company DSM-Sinochem, said:

“Ultimately it is in our interest to curb AMR as if antibiotics become ineffective we will have to close our business. When life saving medicine is sold at the price of chewing gum it encourages irresponsible manufacturing and transfers the cost onto society in the form of AMR.”

Recent high-profile reports have warned of the dangers of not tackling AMR. A bleak report by economist Jim O’Neill, commissioned by the British government and released in May 2015, estimated that 700 000 deaths globally could be attributed to AMR in 2015 and that the annual toll would climb to 10 million deaths in the next 35 years.

The beginning of the end for dental amalgam use in the EU

In 2017, the EU adopted a revised mercury regulation, paving the way for ratification of the Minamata Convention.

Among other important provisions, the EU regulation sets a global precedent by outlining steps to eventually phase out dental amalgam.

Starting mid-2018, the new rule bans amalgam use in children under 15 years, and in pregnant or breastfeeding women. It also requires each Member State to implement national plans to reduce amalgam use by mid-2019. By mid-2020, the European Commission is required to make recommendations on the eventual phase out of amalgam.

Several Member States have

already significantly reduced or banned amalgam. Dental amalgam use is banned in Sweden; only used in 3% of dental restorations in Finland; 5% in Denmark; and 10% in the Netherlands and Germany.

Clearly, the same is possible for the whole of the EU — and sooner rather than later. That's because Europe uses more amalgam than any other geographic region and consequently is the largest polluter.

Amalgam is condemned as a risk for "secondary poisoning" by a European Commission scientific advisory body because dental mercury gets into fish that people eat. Furthermore, the European Commission's health advisory committee recommended a ban on its use in fillings in children and

pregnant women.

Given that dental amalgam is 50% mercury, it is important that all citizens become aware of the risks dental mercury poses to human health and the environment. From now on, when in need of a filling, ask your dentists for mercury free alternatives — composite or glass ionomer — that are available, affordable and effective.



Member in Focus: Lithuanian Fund for Nature

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN) is an NGO working for the conservation of nature and wildlife in Lithuania. Here they speak to META about the work they do:

“Our mission is to care about wildlife and to encourage the sustainable use of natural resources. We were the first Lithuanian environmental NGO established after the restoration of state independence in 1991. We are currently a team of 15 very dedicated and experienced nature conservationists working to protect biodiversity, for the sustainable management of natural resources and on ensuring adequate standards of environmental services.

Our main focus areas:

- nature conservation in general;
 - restoration and management of endangered habitats and species;
 - policy work at national and EU level advocating for better land use, nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;
 - nature monitoring and inventory;
- &
- management of invasive species.

What are you working on at the moment?

We are promoting paludiculture in Lithuania in order to minimise climate change effects and to ease agriculture's impact on wetland-like habitats. We are involved in restoration of a great number of peatlands. We are currently putting a lot of effort into preserving old oak-wood habitats of a hermit beetle. We are also very concerned about the improvement of the state of the Baltic sea and particularly focusing on the promotion of sustainable fisheries, monitoring of microplastic pollution and decreasing nutrient leakage into rivers. We have always focused on three main fields dependent on natural resources – forestry, fisheries and agriculture. Making these fields more sustainable is our main goal.

What does EEB membership mean to your organisation?

EEB membership means full involvement in European environmental policies. Since EU accession, we feel that using EU tools to promote environmental policies is a much more effective way to influence local policies and national decisions. We expect to benefit from

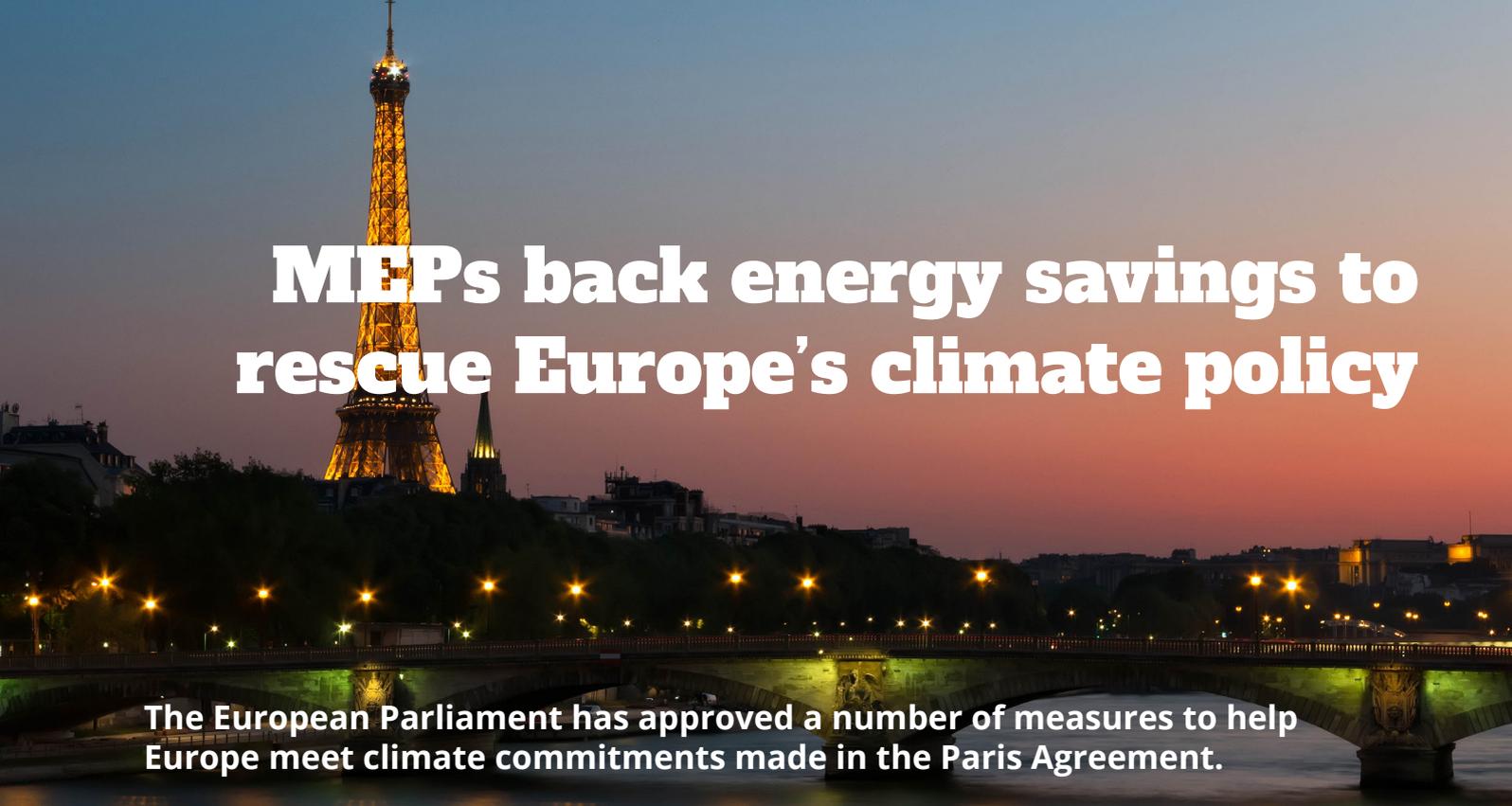


LITHUANIAN FUND FOR NATURE

EEB membership by getting access to enormous amounts of information and experience gained by other EEB members.

Any recent success stories?

We were recently involved in successful wetland restoration projects. Restoration of protected plant species in new habitats is also a success and proof that with an appropriate habitats creation and seed manipulation it is possible to restore and proliferate protected plant species well outside their current growing areas. Recently we have focused on microbead pollution and we managed to successfully draw the public's attention to the problem. We also have organised a number of educational events which attracted a great number of participants, e.g. "All Species Rally", "Bats Night", "United for Life Baltic Sea", etc.



MEPs back energy savings to rescue Europe's climate policy

The European Parliament has approved a number of measures to help Europe meet climate commitments made in the Paris Agreement.

European countries have been criticised for failing to approve sufficient measures to tackle climate change so far, but MEPs hope that European action can provide the impetus and oversight required to ramp-up climate action.

In votes held in Strasbourg, the European Parliament approved a number of positions on a series of new EU laws collectively known as the 'Clean Energy Package'.

Welcoming the progress, EEB Climate and Energy Policy Officer Roland Joebstl said:

"It was a good day for the climate, but it's now up to national governments to start matching their rhetoric with effective action to cut emissions: energy efficiency is the cheapest and most effective way to do this."

New European laws are drafted between the European Parliament and national government ministers in the Council. Ministers have consistently shown less ambition than MEPs on climate issues, despite strong statements made by their governments on the international stage.

The 2018 Climate Change Performance Index shows that no country is currently doing enough to meet its Paris commitments entirely, although some EU Member States are performing significantly better than

others.

Sweden, Lithuania and nine other EU states were nevertheless given a 'high' rating in the Index. Ireland was the worst performing European country, rated as 'very low'.

Insufficient climate action by Germany has become a recurring topic in ongoing negotiations to form a new government. In a draft agreement shared last week, the

The 2018 Climate Change Performance Index shows that no country is currently doing enough to meet its Paris commitments entirely

socialist and Christian parties reaffirmed their commitment to 2020 and 2030 goals and promised to announce the date of a national coal phase out before the end of this year. Legislative measures are yet to be published.

This week's European Parliament votes called for higher targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

If accepted by the Council, the EU

will need to produce at least 35% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 — a target that is seen as insufficient by environmentalists but overambitious by certain coal-addicted countries.

A binding target of 35% was also agreed for energy efficiency measures which will need to reduce the amount of energy that is currently wasted, for example by improving insulation and imposing minimum performance requirements for households and industry.

Experts also welcomed the European Parliament's decision to include extending the reach of energy efficiency rules to tackle pollution and energy waste in the transport sector. Joebstl added:

"Governments must now join the European Parliament's fight to stop dirty diesel and ensure the energy efficiency success story is extended to transport."

The Parliament also agreed on reaching zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 — a target greeted by the director of the climate thinktank E3G with a single word: "Gamechanger".

Be sure to subscribe to meta. eeb.org to stay abreast of the latest developments in EU climate action.

Director of the EEB's Global Policy and Sustainability Unit explains how mainstreaming sustainable development can point the way to a better future.

A vision for a better Europe and a better world

By Patrizia Heidegger



"It is so decided": the words sounded proudly through the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations in New York.

It was late September 2015 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had just been adopted. The goals set out a new ambitious, inclusive and universal set of global goals. In short the governments of the world made a commitment to leave no one behind and to ensure well-being for all within planetary boundaries.

The SDGs are the global crisis plan: from the least-developed to the richest countries, everyone faces the challenge to achieve the goals. Ending poverty and addressing social needs including education, health, social protection, and creating job opportunities must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build sustainable economies, tackle climate change and ensure the protection of biodiversity and natural resources for future generations.

Now why is such an agenda necessary and why do we have to mainstream SDGs throughout all different policies? Humankind has brought about amazing technical innovation and solutions to many problems, such as more resource-efficient ways of producing consumer goods or technologies for renewable energy. It has dramatically improved its ability to safeguard human health.

It has made progress with regards to many social issues, for instance, in ensuring education for more and more children. But despite all this progress, while our economies and trade have grown around the world and more and more wealth has been created, there is something fundamentally wrong:

Some 80% of humanity lives on less than 10 US dollars a day, while the richest 20% account for around three quarters of the world's income. Inequalities and income differentials are widening in most societies and between different parts of the world: only a few benefit from the immense wealth humankind has accumulated.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) about 795 million people, that is one in ten, suffers from chronic undernourishment. According to UNICEF, more than 20,000 children die every day due to poverty.

Human activity, in particular, our economic activity with its production and consumption patterns, is overstepping our planetary boundaries, that is, we are trespassing beyond the environmental limits in which we can live safely. We are facing a dramatic loss of biodiversity, the destruction of key ecosystems, the consequences of climate change and the depletion of natural resources.

The well-being of humanity and

its ability to develop and thrive for generations to come is at risk. It is high time to finally make sustainable development the key challenge to be achieved - from the global to the local level. For us as Europe's largest network of environmental citizen organisations that means that we are fighting to mainstream the SDGs across European policy making and public spending. Currently, sustainable development does not rank high on the list of priorities of our top policy makers in the EU, and there are too many contradictions between different policies, such as: we spend public funding on technologies related to fossil fuels while at the same time we want to move to a low carbon economy and fulfil our commitments under the Paris Agreement. Mainstreaming the SDGs means ensuring our policies are coherent and do not undermine each other.

A Europe in which all actions are targeted towards sustainable development holds the promise of creating a society in which all can benefit from prosperity and live well while safeguarding our planet for the generations to come. What could such an EU look like?

- Instead of locking EU funding for subsidies for unsustainable farming practices, we live in an EU that produces healthy and sustainable food while creating



The adoption of the SDGs at United Nations New York September 2015. Image: UN Photo

promising economic models for farmers and rural communities.

- Instead of supporting out-dated technologies based on fossil fuels we live in a low-carbon society that is mainly based on renewable, citizen-centered energy supply.
- Instead of focusing on economic growth as the key indicator for progress, we understand success as a society in which all can live well and which is able to respect planetary boundaries.
- Instead of exporting environmentally harmful practices such as resource extraction, waste handling or polluting or dangerous production of consumer goods to outside our borders, we make sure that our consumption and production patterns are not just clean and fair for Europeans but for everyone along supply chains around the world.
- An EU where not only are SDGs mainstreamed in all policies and instruments are aligned with sustainable development, but all public spending serves the purpose of achieving the goals. This means ending all harmful subsidies and having more transparency about how EU funds are allocated.

Launch of European SDG project



MAKE EUROPE SUSTAINABLE FOR ALL

The universal and integrated approach of Agenda 2030 guides political change at the local, national and international level. It also supports active participation through civil society organisations (CSOs). Cooperation amongst CSOs has become more important than ever. It is important to develop a sense of ownership of the SDGs within society so that the public participate in and push for the successful implementation of these global goals at the national and local level. In order to successfully put pressure on governments to implement the SDGs, it is crucial to make it relevant in public debates. In response to that, the EEB is leading a cross-sectoral project which aims to keep the SDGs on the agenda over the coming years. The three-year project, called Make Europe Sustainable for All, is funded by the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation. The project combines the expertise and experience of 25 partner organisations from across Europe. Its approach responds to the need for a meaningful, participative and legitimate Agenda 2030 implementation and the necessity of global, holistic and integrated actions, working from the global to the local level. Its aim is to promote an ambitious implementation of Agenda 2030 by and in the EU, making the EU and European governments accountable and ambitious in their implementation.

While strengthening the

European network SDG Watch Europe and encouraging and supporting the national multi-sectoral civil society coalitions, enhancing cooperation and national and local CSOs capacities, European and national policy and raising-awareness campaigns, we want to substantially increase awareness amongst EU citizens and policymakers about their roles and responsibilities in working for a sustainable future, the transition to more sustainable lifestyles and developing and promoting coherent policies. By encouraging the participation and cooperation of all civil society sectors, we want to ensure that sustainability is at the centre of decision-making, guaranteeing that no one is left behind.

The project activities will tackle all 17 SDGs, reflecting on their inter-linkages and interdependencies through diverse European, national and local actions. There will be three thematic campaigns on Human Development and Inequalities, Sustainable Food and Agriculture, Sustainable Consumption and Production, integrating in each cross-cutting issues on gender, migration and climate change.

At the EEB, through all our actions and this project, we play an important role in promoting, shaping and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs, ensuring real change at European and global level and making "leave no one behind" not only a slogan, but a real achievement in building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.

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

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



GERMAN 'CATHEDRAL' BULLDOZED TO MAKE WAY FOR EXPANDING COAL MINE

FOR THE first time in more than 200 years a German 'cathedral' has been deliberately torn down.

Demolition teams moved in on the former place of worship this morning to clear the land ready for the expansion of a giant open-cast coal mine.

The 130 year old building was standing on top of deposits of one of Europe's dirtiest fuels: brown coal, or 'lignite'.

Read more on META.eeb.org.



THOUSANDS TAKE TO STREETS TO PROTEST SPANISH MINING BOOM

PLANS to mine lithium – the key metal used to manufacture smartphone batteries – less than 3km from the centre of the Spanish city of Cáceres have been met with huge public opposition.

Spanish mining company Sacyr and the Australian mining giant Plymouth Minerals want to mine for the metal in Valdeflores – the site of a former mine that closed in the 1980s which has since become a wildlife haven. Read more on META.eeb.org.

Opinion

OPINION: ECONOMIC GROWTH IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



FEDERICO DEMARIA is an ecological economist at Environmental Science and Technology Institute, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

He co-edited several books including: "Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era" (Routledge, 2015) and the forthcoming "Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary".

He shares with META his opinion on the relevance of growth and its relation with environmental sustainability.

Read more on META.eeb.org.

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION IN 2018

THIS year is expected to be a turning point in the way we use and think of plastic. As the EU prepares to release its first-ever strategy to curb plastic pollution, META investigates how we can all contribute.

More than eight million tonnes of plastic leak into the ocean each year, which is equivalent to dumping a truck filled with plastic into the sea every minute. Read more on META.eeb.org.

RECYCLING – WHO REALLY LEADS THE WORLD?



A NEW report published by Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd with the support of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) challenges countries reporting the highest recycling rates across the world.

Researchers found differences in the way countries measure recycling rates, warning that some eye-catching recycling rate claims need to be treated with caution. Read more on META.eeb.org.

SPONGE CITIES – HOW URBAN WETLANDS REDUCE FLOOD RISK



FLOODING is an all too real risk for cities around the world. Climate change has made the sight of waterlogged homes and businesses a regular one in the media. Now, environmentalists say encouraging wetlands in urban areas could be part of the solution to the problem. Read more on META.eeb.org.

5 THINGS THE NEW GERMAN GOVERNMENT WILL MEAN FOR EUROPE'S ENVIRONMENT

AFTER marathon talks, and more than four months after voters went to the polls, German politicians finally look set to form a new government – and Angela Merkel will retain her place as Europe's longest-serving elected leader.



As the EU's biggest Member State, what happens in Germany matters for people across Europe. META takes a look at what the new German government will mean for Europe's environment and how some EEB members have responded. More on META.eeb.org.



WE'LL SEE YOU IN COURT: EUROPEAN COMMISSION TELLS NINE MEMBER STATES

AFTER hosting a 'toxic bloc' summit of environment ministers European Commissioner Karmenu Vella has declared: "we can delay no more" when it comes to tackling Europe's air pollution crisis.

After their ministers failed to demonstrate any significant new measures, the European Commission is now expected to take nine national governments to court for their failure to improve the quality of air in their cities.

Read more on META.eeb.org.



40 DAYS – NO PLASTIC. COULD YOU TOUGH IT OUT?

PEOPLE across Europe are being urged to give up plastic during the 40 days of Lent.



WANT TO BUY LOCAL, EAT BETTER AND USE LESS PACKAGING?

A NEW way of buying your groceries is catching on; one that is local, social, and better for the environment.

The Food Assembly is a new food buying model that uses the internet to connect customers with their local producers, their neighbours and the environment.

New EEB Economic Transition Working Group

In November 2017, 15.000+ scientists issued a warning cry to humanity in BioScience about the sorry state of our biosphere. They called for fundamental changes to be made to our economic system. As much as we need to continue to score victories on things like tightening pollution standards for various industrial processes, we also have to heed the calls from various scientific fields about the urgent need for more profound economic reforms. They say we need absolute reductions in what is extracted and what is put into the global pipeline. Today, only 7% of materials are circular and there are limits as to how much can ever become circular.

Another study showed that a mining boom caused a parallel boom in conflicts.

Also in November, the EEB decided to start a new working group on precisely this: the deeper economic transition that is so urgently needed. A subsequent survey among EEB members showed that environmental NGOs from all over the EU are interested in doing extra work on the EC priorities, the doughnut and degrowth economy and green/sustainable finance – to name but a few things that this new working group will be active on from now on.

Two events in relation to this new chapter of EEB work have already taken place:

- 22/2: a debate on well-being

beyond growth with ecological economists, representatives from DG GROW and DG Devco and MEP Philippe Lamberts.

- 5-6/3: the first Economic Transition Working Group (ET WG)

Upcoming events:

- 18-19/9: Post-growth conference in the European Parliament (co-organised by EEB)
- 17 or 20/9: second Economic Transition Working Group (ET WG)

While the directors of both the EEB's EU and Global units will play a key role in this working group, Nick Meynen from the GPS unit is your go-to person for all information about this working group.

Coming and going

Leaving the EEB

Ritalee Birabwa

After 12 years with the EEB, Ritalee left her role as administrative assistant to continue her studies.

Louise Duprez

After 8 years with the EEB, Louise left to take up the role of Project Manager for Sustainable Mobility at Bruxelles Environnement.

Ivo Lammertink

Ivo finished up an internship at the EEB working on energy and climate. He is continuing his studies in the Netherlands.

Alejandro Criado Monleon

Alejandro completed an internship with the EEB's water and agriculture policy team.

Joining the EEB

Patrick ten Brink

Patrick joined the EEB as EU Policy Director. He previously worked as Director of IEEP-Brussels and head of its Green Economy Programme.

Elise Vitali

Elise joined the EEB as Circular Economy and Chemicals Assistant.

Andrea Gonzalez

Andrea joined the Administration team as the new Secretary.

Alessia Biasioli

Alessia joined the EEB team as the new Events Assistant.

Laura Hildt

Laura has started an internship in the EEB's Global Policies and Sustainability Team.

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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