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European Environmental Bureau

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

META MORPHOSIS

WHY WE NEED TO GET BIG ON NATURE

Jeremy Wates
EEB Secretary General

Editorial

These are difficult times for the EU. Grexit, the future role of Greece in the eurozone, and Brexit, the possibility that the UK's forthcoming referendum on Europe will result in it leaving the EU, together with the pressures and conflicts at Europe's borders, dominate the headlines and the working time of European officials. Within this maelstrom, it may seem unsurprising that the environment and the need to protect it is getting lost, even if this is tragic for Europe's wildlife and countryside and the EU citizens who reap the benefits of nature. But a more thorough look at Europe's problems shows how the decision to, at best, ignore nature and, at worst, dismantle some of the laws that protect it is totally misguided.

When President Juncker last autumn mandated his incoming Environment Commissioner to 'carry out an in-depth evaluation of the Birds and Habitats directives and assess the potential for merging them into a more modern piece of legislation', he implicitly pre-judged the outcome of the upcoming fitness check by suggesting that the directives themselves are problematic. In fact, all available evidence suggests that the main problems stem not from the text of the directives, but from shortcomings in their implementation.

Just as weak governance and fragile institutions are major explanations for the problems facing the shakiest countries in the eurozone, they are also serious impediments to protecting the environment – even if the failures in implementing of nature protection laws are by no means limited to such countries. As a new study confirms that the world is entering a period of mass extinction at a scale not seen in 66 million years, putting into question the very laws that are meant to turn around this trend in Europe is, to put it mildly, foolish and ill-guided.

At first glance, the State of Nature report published by the European Environmental Agency (EEA) in May does not tell the most positive of stories.

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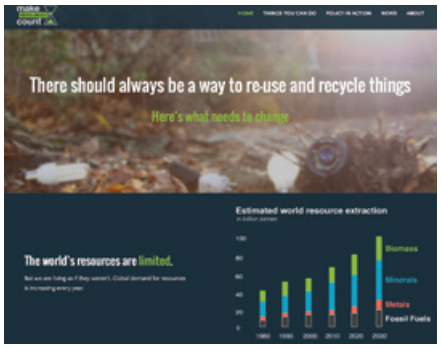
As our Senior Policy Officer Leonardo Mazza explains on page 3, the report, the largest assessment of Europe's nature ever undertaken, reveals that over half of the species protected under the EU Habitats Directive still have an unfavourable conservation status, and that around 17% of wild bird species remain threatened, while 15% are near threatened, declining or depleted. Meanwhile, just 16% of habitat assessments are favourable, with the status of grasslands, wetlands and dune habitats being of particular cause for concern.

Yet on closer inspection, there is a positive message hiding in there, namely that efforts to protect vulnerable flora and fauna work when properly implemented. As the Commission itself said in a statement accompanying the report: "Targeted conservation actions have brought successes, but a much greater effort is required for the situation to improve significantly". The report found, for example, that bearded vultures and white-headed ducks have benefited from targeted EU conservation efforts with their numbers now substantially improved.

This is proof, if it were needed, that we need vigorous EU laws to protect the environment, and that they need to be enforced. The slashing of environmental legislation in the name of better regulation and an outdated jobs and growth agenda is not only harmful for the environment, but also risks alienating citizens who until now have generally been supportive of the EU. Eurobarometer surveys show that 95% of EU citizens say protecting the environment is important to them personally and 77% of EU citizens agree that European environmental legislation is necessary for protecting the environment in their country.

At a time when Europeans in the UK, Greece and elsewhere are disillusioned with the EU, would it not make more sense to focus on initiatives that play to Europe's strengths such as improving the rule of law, good governance, its natural heritage, education and know-how rather than blindly cutting EU laws that bring benefits? President Juncker and his team urgently need to change course and use their next four years in office to deliver a reform agenda that will bring a more democratic and sustainable Europe. Let us hope they are listening and ready to act rather than sticking blindly to an agenda that is not fit for purpose. •

MAKING RESOURCE USE IN **EUROPE SUSTAINABLE!**



At the end of May, the EEB launched a campaign to raise awareness about unsustainable resource use in Europe and the need for action at EU level.
The Make Resources Count campaign links how our products are designed to the amount of waste we generate. If products are 'eco-designed' so that they are longer-lasting, more repairable and recyclable, and we re-use and recycle things more, we can make a giant step towards cutting waste and improving resource security in Europe.

The campaign launch coincided with the start of the European Commission's public consultation for its upcoming Circular Economy Package, which should be published towards the end of this year.
It will be the second version of the proposal, after the first, which included higher recycling targets for EU member states, was ditched in controversial circumstances in March 2015. Through an access to documents request, the EEB is trying to elucidate how the decision to withdraw the original proposal was taken. It was already clear that the withdrawal was opposed by the Council of Ministers and a majority of MEPs, and a subsequent ruling of the European Court of Justice in another case indicates that it may even have been illegal.

In the meantime, the Commission has repeatedly stated it will issue a new package which is more ambitious and will cover product design as well as waste policy.

Make Resources Count will campaign to maintain the high recycling targets proposed in the original package. It will also push for the inclusion of product design requirements such as higher recyclability, making it easier for products to be repaired and better durability of products, and look at how to provide consumers, and repair and recycling services, with more information about the components and materials of products.

The campaign website is available at www.makeresourcescount.eu and also includes a Twitter feed @Resourcescount and a Facebook page. The campaign is expected to last for the time it takes to adopt the Circular Economy Package at EU level.

EEB members interested in this area should contact Sébastien Pant (sebastien.pant@eeb.org) to see how they can get involved. •

Sébastien Pant, Communications Officer,
Air Quality and Resource Efficiency

SOS: URGENT NEED TO ENFORCE EU NATURE LAWS

While much of Europe's biodiversity is in dire straits, a new European Commission report has shown that species can recover when EU Nature legislation is properly implemented.

The 'State of Nature' report, the largest assessment of Europe's nature ever undertaken, gives us an unparalleled insight into the state of our biodiversity. It reveals that over half (60%) of the species protected under the Habitats Directive still have an unfavourable conservation status, and that around 17% of wild bird species remain threatened, while 15% are near threatened, declining or depleted. Just 16% of habitat assessments are favourable, with grasslands, wetlands and dune habitats being of particular cause for concern.

When it comes to the reasons behind such levels of deterioration, the report specifically highlights the negative impact of polluting farming practices such as fertilisation and the use of pesticides, as well as an increase in livestock densities. Other main drivers of biodiversity loss include grassland conversion, the move away from pastoral farming and human-induced "modifications of natural conditions" (mostly relating to changes to the water cycle).

Further, the state of our biodiversity is unlikely to be helped by new so-called 'greening' measures for Europe's farm policy that fail to address the most pressing problems. For example, most member states will allow crops to be grown and pesticides to be used on areas that were meant to be set aside for protecting biodiversity on farmland (Ecological Focus Areas).

The wealth of information gathered in State of Nature is expected to inform the Commission's upcoming mid-term assessment of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 that will be published in October 2015. In anticipation of this assessment, in early June the EEB joined forces with BirdLife and WWF to produce 'Make Space for Nature', a report which sets out EU and member state level policy recommendations for protecting nature and improving people's quality of life.

At the same time, the EEB and its members continue to support and promote Nature Alert, a campaign launched by the EEB, BirdLife, WWF and Friends of the Earth Europe (FOEE) which aims to get as many people as possible across Europe to complete the Commission's public consultation on the Birds and Habitats Directives.

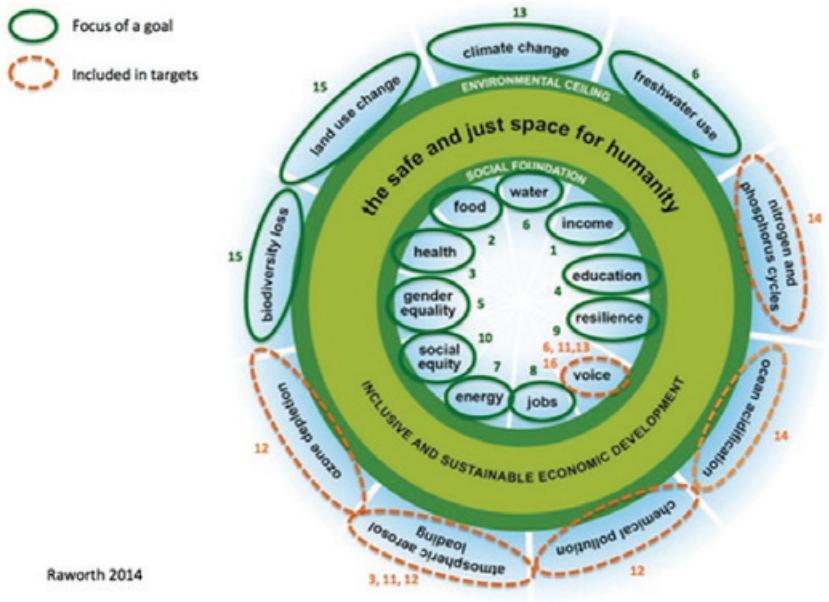
By doing so, EU citizens can voice their support for these laws and underline that they should not fall victim to the Commission's ongoing deregulation drive.
So far over 300 000 people have joined the campaign to defend EU nature laws from being watered down in the name of flexibility and modernisation, calling instead for better implementation and enforcement. The public consultation ends on 24 July, so if you have not already done so, take part now and get your friends and colleagues to do so too! •

http://www.eeb.org/index.cfm/activities/biodiversity-nature/biodiversity/nature-alert/

Leonardo de Mazza,
Senior Policy Officer
Biodiversity

In this issue

WHY THE **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS MATTER!**



From: The SDGs and the doughnut economy. Kate Raworth

On 1 January 2016, the European Commission and all EU member states will need to start implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are to be agreed in New York this September. What does this mean for the EEB and its members? In short, the majority of those goals are directly linked to issues already worked on by EEB members, including biodiversity, marine, fisheries, forestation, sustainable agriculture and resource management. Many of the SDG targets and indicators will therefore be useful as political arguments and leverage for more ambitious policymaking in Europe.

To illustrate the point, it is worth taking a close look at some of the SDGs and what they mean for Europe. Goal 2, for example, is aimed at "ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture". It highlights, inter alia, the need by 2030, to "double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers".

By the same date, it will be necessary to "ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality".

And by 2020, Goal 2 calls for the maintainance of the "genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species... and ...access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge".

It is easy to dismiss the goals from a European point of view and see them as relevant only for rural development in Africa, but they will have to be implemented in the EU too!

Another SDG that is highly pertinent for Europe is Goal 12 that focuses on sustainable consumption and production patterns. This goal should tally nicely with the promised EU package on waste and the circular economy and help us to push for much higher ambitions on limiting resource use. It will also be a good base for us to use to demand national and regional strategies and targets on these topics, as there is no "pick and choose" option: all goals have to be achieved in all countries.

Goal 12 highlights, for example, the need to by 2030 "achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources" and to "halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses".

These are far from the only SDGs that are relevant to the EU and I invite you to look at the whole list.

The year 2016 will be crucial for the environmental movement to really get involved in the SDG process, both in terms of policy work to promote the implementation of the goals, and in the review and accountability mechanisms. A lot is expected from civil society and until now the environmental movement's engagement with the SDGs has been sadly lacking. This is an opportunity to show we are committed to sustainable development for all.

The EEB is ready to help you build capacity in this area and during the AGM in October, we will organise an SDGs workshop. We also plan to develop an online toolkit for members with tips and tricks, best practices and updates to enable you to become pioneers in implementing this world-changing framework. •

Leida Rijnhout
Director, Global Policies and Sustainability

EEB SCORES INDUSTRY **REQUESTS TO CONTINUE USING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS**

REACH AUTHORISATION SCORE CARDS

EEB gives amber light to Rolls-Royce DEHP application

"The aim of authorisation is to ensure the good functioning of the internal market while assuring that the risks from substances of very high concern are properly controlled and that these substances are progressively replaced by suitable alternative substances or technologies where these are economically and technically viable." (REACH Art. 55).

What is a scorecard? EEB's verdict on authorisation applications, the opinions handed down by ECHA's Committees, and overall compliance with REACH requirements for granting authorisations to substances of very high concern (SVHC).

The aim? To improve the authorisation process in order to ensure that SVHC are progressively replaced by safer alternative substances or technologies.

Rolls-Royce application for the use of DEHP during the manufacture of aero-engine fan blades

Uses applied for are specific and sufficiently documented.	■		
Information provided by the applicant conformed with the legal text requirements.	■		
Information was accessible to the public.		■	
Applicant demonstrated adequate control or that the proposed risk management measures were appropriate and effective.	■		
Applicant demonstrated that there were no suitable alternatives.		■	
Applicant demonstrated that the socio-economic benefits of using the substance outweighed the risks.		■	
RAC's opinion	■		
SEAC's opinion		■	

To ensure that the risks from substances with certain hazardous properties are properly controlled and that these substances are progressively replaced by suitable (and safer) alternatives, the main EU chemicals law REACH includes an authorisation system. According to this, companies aiming to keep using or manufacturing so-called substances of very high concern (SVHCs) in the EU are awarded a use-specific and time-limited permission.

This permission can only be granted if applicants for authorisation prove that either the use of the SVHC is adequately controlled or that the benefits outweigh the risks and that no (safer) alternatives are available. Applications are evaluated by European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA's) scientific committees. They inform the European Commission of their conclusions and the Commission then decides whether the authorisation should be granted or whether all uses of the SVHC are banned.

To date, 44 companies have requested authorisation for 56 specific uses of substances of very high concern in the EU. ECHA has recommended that all of these authorisations should be granted and the Commission has taken six (favourable) decisions. None of the authorisations has been rejected. However, in our view, authorisations granted should be the exception, not the rule.

It is imperative that the REACH authorisation process is used as planned, namely to phase out SVHCs, and not to give companies a green light to continue using toxic substances when alternatives exist. This is why we have decided to launch a series of scorecards, whereby we use a traffic-light system to present our verdict on: authorisation applications; the opinions handed down by ECHA; and overall compliance with REACH requirements for granting authorisations.

The first two scorecards were published in May on applications for the first substance in the authorisation queue, the controversial plastic softener Bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), which has been identified by scientists as an endocrine disrupting substance with links to cancer, reproductive problems, genital malformations and even diabetes.

The EEB awarded an amber light to Rolls-Royce for its application to continue using DEHP to manufacture aero-engine fan blades, but gave a red light to attempts by other companies to carry on using DEHP in PVC plastic items. We believe that the latter application is unacceptable for several reasons, not least because of a lack of transparency and the availability of safer alternatives.

The EEB score cards will hopefully help pressure ECHA and the European Commission to refuse unjustified applications, thereby ensuring that the authorisation process is respected and that SVHCs are progressively replaced by safer alternative substances or technologies. •

Tatiana Santos,
Senior Policy Officer, Chemicals and Nanotechnology

CUTTING RESOURCE USE: **IT'S IN THE DESIGN**

The EEB published a report in March examining the best ways of making use of the Ecodesign Directive to cut resource use and help turn Europe into a circular economy.

The report entitled *Delivering resource-efficient products* found that the Ecodesign Directive could deliver substantial environmental and economic benefits in its current form without a reform of its overall framework.

The Ecodesign Directive has already delivered significant benefits by cutting the amount of energy electrical or electronic products consume. Through what are mostly simple and already available design options, products can be manufactured to consume less energy in the 'use' stage.

The report found that by applying a pragmatic case-by-case approach, including identifying design requirements that support better reparability or durability of products, the potential for the directive to deliver resource savings, on top of energy savings, is huge.

For example, carrying out a range of simple, already available design options to extend the lifetime of laptops, printers and washing machines in the EU could lead to savings in greenhouse gas emissions of over 1 million tonnes per year, which is the equivalent of taking 477,000 cars off the road for one year.

The EEB has also produced a report *Making more durable and repairable products.* This shows how a clear system rating products on reparability and durability criteria would help better inform consumers and end users and allow them to compare products. •

Sébastien Pant,
Communications Officer, Air Quality and Resource Efficiency

EEB MEMBER FOCUS

News from EEB members and working groups

ROMANIAN SUCCESSES

The environmental NGO community in Romania has many reasons to be proud. For more than two decades, it has supported policy making, environmental education, information sharing, training, public awareness campaigns and pilot projects dealing with water, soil, waste, climate change and rural sustainable development, to name just a few.

The knowledge and expertise built up by green NGOs has helped different audiences, including administrative bodies, the public, other not-for-profit organisations and businesses. In short, anyone and everyone wanting change for the benefit of the environment.

We are particularly pleased that we have managed to remain a politically independent, non-profit organisation in spite of various pressures, not least obsolete mentalities and the economic crisis. In general, the achievements of Romanian environmental NGOs are numerous and varied.

A recent success was Chevron's decision to stop its shale gas exploration and exploitation project in Romania at the beginning of 2015 following large local, national and international protests.

A newly launched campaign is that initiated by the Natura 2000 Network and the Environmental NGO Coalition against massive deforestation, illegal logging and timber exports, and an investigation by the national anti-fraud agency is now underway.

As these examples show, battles have been won, but the struggle goes on as financially buoyant business groups work to undermine the environment by exploiting gaps in legislation and political support.

We never know what will happen next; Chevron may, for example, find new ways to convince decision-makers and local business groups to support fracking again. Further, the ECCG, like other NGOs, is facing an uncertain future as it becomes more and more difficult to get the financial support needed to continue our work.

Prof. Petruta Moisi, President Eco Counselling Centre Galati (ECCG)
www.cceg.ro

TRANSBOUNDARY RIVER PROTECTION

The Eco-TIRAS International Association of River Keepers was established in 1999 by a group of Moldovan and Ukrainian environmental NGOs working to safeguard the transboundary Dniester River basin that is shared by these two countries.

Eco-TIRAS currently unites 51 eco-NGOs from both countries with its headquarters in Chisinau, Moldova. During our 16 years of activity we have targeted attention at various issues. These include developing and promoting a modern river basin agreement for Dniester in close cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This was signed in Rome in November 2012 and ratified by Moldova, but we are still awaiting ratification by Ukraine before we can start implementing it.

We have also focused on unifying the efforts of all stakeholders to better implement integrated river basin management (IRBM). To this end, we have organised seven international conferences bringing together the interests and views of all stakeholders to influence proposals to national governments.

Further, Eco-TIRAS is busy promoting IRBM principles among youth, NGOs, universities and the media. Each year we organise Youth Summer Schools for youngsters aged 15-21 and expeditions along the river by kayak for university students and lecturers, NGOs and journalists.

Another strand of our work, taking into account the recent signing of association agreements between the EU and Moldova and Ukraine, is helping to modernise national environmental legislation, in particular that relating to water management issues.

Ilya Trombitsky, Executive Director,
www.eco-tiras.org

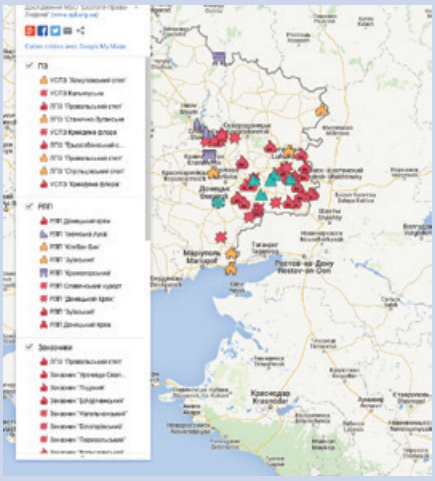
MILITARY ACTION IN UKRAINE

Environment-People-law (EPL) is a group of environmental lawyers, environmentalists, journalists and linguists working nationally and internationally to provide legal assistance to citizens and organisations seeking to protect the environment and their own environmental rights.
One of the hottest topics in Ukraine right now is the consequences of military actions in the eastern part of the country for the environment and human health. It is vital to assess the scope of this damage and to start remediation actions in the affected areas.

EPL has made study trips to the conflict area and, with assistance from volunteers, studied the impact of military actions on water, air, soil and protected areas. We have seen how damaged water treatment facilities mean that water is often unsuitable for drinking and witnessed the serious damage caused to forests as a result of fires from shelling - about 17% of forests and 24% of steppes (grassland plains) have been damaged this way. The state of the environment in eastern Ukraine is constantly deteriorating as water and soil pollution, the degradation of natural reserves, the destruction of forests and steppe and the transformation of landscapes become everyday reality.
EPL has collected information about these consequences of the war and posted them on this interactive map.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zbSMscEgA8nQ.k3-ikECY7sf0.

Hanna Khomechko, Development director, Environment-People-Law



SUCCESS CORNER

News from EEB members and working groups

AARHUS TO THE RESCUE IN IRELAND

Tramore Backstrand is a sheltered, species rich, wetland complex on the south-east coast of Ireland beside the busy seaside resort of Tramore. The wetlands were designated a Special Protection Area (SPA), a Ramsar site and later a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), but they were also host to a landfill which took unsorted waste. To allow the dump to grow, the SPA boundary excluded nearby saltmarshes and mudflats that are important areas for seagrasses known as Zostera, which, in turn, are vital for bird feeding and roosting.

Coastwatchers tried to halt the spread of the dump for years, but efforts to pursue the issue through the national court were thwarted and highlighting the problem via the media was not enough. A complaint was therefore lodged with the European Commission and finally 13 years later, in April 2005, we received a positive court ruling setting down the need for habitat reinstatement or compensation.

Coastwatch, as a complainant, was included in planning and implementing the court decision. It was agreed to close the dump and prioritise wintering bird grazing and roosting as its future use. In parallel, Coastwatch identified farmland at the opposite end of the same Natura 2000 site as compensatory ground. Twenty-two hectares were purchased by the county council with state funding and a wetland area contoured out to replace the 7 hectares of mudflat and saltmarsh habitat lost to the dump.

The method was costly and more engineered than an ecologist would like, but on the positive side the whole area was to be managed as a Natura site and linked to the SPA.

In April 2013, the dyke was opened to flood the compensatory area, and we are still working on monitoring and tweaking habitat development and site management.

Among all the breaches of EU nature laws that Coastwatch has covered, this one was frustrating given the time taken to sort it out. But it was also pleasing to see Aarhus principles applied to tackle the mess and create a positive result for nature.

Karin Dubsky, International Coordinator, Coastwatch Europe

STAND UP FOR LAWS THAT PROTECT EUROPE'S NATURAL HERITAGE!

The Better Regulation Package presented by Vice President Frans Timmermans on 19 May was widely seen as a test case for the new Juncker Commission. While the publication of the package was expected, delivering on one of Juncker's 10 political commitments, the EEB and other NGOs were watching carefully to see if the Commission President had been listening to criticisms about his lack of attention to sustainability.

Our verdict? This package carries on from where President Barroso left off, but goes even further down the wrong path. Juncker seems to have learnt nothing from the disapprobation that met his controversial decision to withdraw the waste package and to be ignoring concerns about his deregulation push that has led NGOs and trade unions to create a 'better regulation' watchdog.

With the package, the Juncker Commission rejected calls for a red tape reduction target based on a 'one in, one out' approach and stressed that its agenda is not deregulation. But in reality, much of what it is proposing is just that: it wants to prioritise the reduction of regulatory burdens; uses controversial terms like 'goldplating' for Member States who use their right to go beyond minimum requirements; and promotes exemptions or 'light' regimes for SMEs and micro enterprises instead of addressing impacts on these businesses as part of an integrated coherent impact assessment.

Under a veil of 'more transparency', the Commission wants to make it easier for companies facing regulation to write their own rules through consultations on draft regulations and delegated acts. Interestingly, the US is asking the EU to adopt such a process as part of the TTIP negotiations as 'good regulatory practices'.

The proposed package also seeks to impose Juncker's 10 priorities on the European Parliament and Council of Ministers and make them the basis for developing joint work programmes. Further, the need to 'quality check' proposals and amendments is given such prominence that it could become near impossible for either the Commission or the other two institutions to propose measures that have not received a seal of approval by the Regulatory Scrutiny Board. This is effectively a technocratic body, made up of three Commission officials and three selected external 'experts' or a yet to be defined 'independent panel'.

The Commission can press ahead with many of these issues on its own, but importantly the planned new Inter Institutional Agreement on Better Law Making (IIABLM) will also need the support of the Parliament and Council. And the first signs suggest that this is far from a given. This is encouraging, in particular as regards the Parliament which, after putting in place President Juncker, has been less than fully effective in playing its role of providing democratic oversight. This has been all the more worrying given that the Commission President has essentially taken the slight increase in his legitimacy, thanks to the Parliament's backing, as a green light to do whatever he wants.

The first priority for Parliament and Council negotiators should therefore be to refuse any reference to Juncker's political guidelines until they have been revised. The reference to climate and energy in them must be extended to include biodiversity, resource efficiency and environmental health, and all these policy areas need to be put together under a comprehensive and effective sustainable development heading. Secondly, the institutions need to reject all deregulatory elements in the Commission's proposal and insist on a more balanced description of regulation that acknowledges its many public and private benefits. Getting this right will be crucial to bringing the EU closer to its citizens. •

Pieter de Pous,
EEB Policy Director

TIME FOR THE EU TO CLEAN UP ITS AIR

Every year, over 400,000 Europeans die prematurely because of air pollution. Poor air quality also makes Europeans sick and significantly reduces their quality of life, in particular in cities where nine out of 10 people breathe air which is considered harmful for their health.

Increased illness, hospital admissions, extra medication and millions of lost working days because of air pollution are very costly for the EU. The health-related costs of air pollution amounted to €330–940 billion in 2010, equivalent to 3-9% of the EU's GDP.[1] Air pollution also causes great harm to Europe's ecosystems, crop yields, buildings and monuments.

Air pollution affects all countries and has no regard for national boundaries and jurisdictions, which is why this should be tackled at the European rather than the national level. One of the best policy tools to do this is the National Emissions Ceilings (NEC) Directive which sets limits for several air pollutants for each country.

The Commission recently proposed to revise this Directive to set new limits for between now and 2030.

But what was already a modest European Commission proposal is now being challenged by several Member States in the Council, some of whom are refusing to agree any new mandatory limits, arguing that these could impinge on future development. These positions are influenced by the interests of heavy polluters, in particular large farms.

The fact that farmers are making a fuss about the new Directive is not a big surprise. What is most striking is that Member States are not picking up on the massive health benefits offered by better air quality. For instance, bringing air pollution in 25 European cities down to the levels recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) would add 22 months to the average life expectancy of their inhabitants and result in financial benefits of €31 billion per year.[2] This is money that could be invested in education, research or healthcare.

It is possible to reduce air pollution levels and an ambitious NEC proposal is achievable. A recent study by the European Parliament showed that the implementation of the 2030 climate targets agreed by the Council last October would alone bring cleaner air than the NEC proposal.[3] This could mainly be achieved by reduced fossil fuel burning which helps not only climate mitigation but also air quality.

With the December Climate Summit in Paris and the negotiation of the NEC directive, 2015 is without doubt a crucial year to secure cleaner air for Europeans. But it will only materialise if EU leaders put people's lives before short-term business and farming interests. •

Louise Duprez,
Senior Policy Officer
Air and Noise

[1] Commission's Impact Assessment, December 2013
[2] http://www.aphekom.org/
[3] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/528802/EPRS_STU%282014%29528802_REV1_EN.pdf

UPDATED STANDARDS FOR POWER PLANTS FAIL TO RECOGNISE BEST PERFORMANCE

The EEB has in recent months stepped up its role in the information exchange on "best available techniques" (BAT) in relation to various industrial processes under the Industrial Emissions Directive. We have been actively involved in the recent Large Combustion Plants BAT reference document (LCP BREF) review, aimed at delivering a high general level of environmental protection for human health and the environment from power plant emissions, and the latest draft will deliver emissions reductions compared to the status quo. However, disappointingly, the upper emission ranges do not, in our opinion, represent genuine BAT levels. BAT sets maximum levels for various pollutants to air, water and soil, and for resource efficiency that can be achieved under technically and economically viable conditions. The EEB's work in this area will cover waste incineration, chemicals, large combustion plants and, subject to funding, mineral extraction.

The failure to agree more ambitious levels in the review of the LCP BREF is largely the result of Member States defending industrial operators rather than public interests. Only Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden actively pushed for higher standards for existing plants. Other countries like Greece, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, France, Denmark, Finland and Spain promoted relaxing health and environmental protection standards, while Italy, with some support from Germany, failed to call for higher ambition.

The outcome of the review means that:

- Existing coal and lignite plants must for the first time meet dedicated BAT levels for mercury pollution;
- The most effective technique for NOx reductions, that of SCR or Selective Catalytic Reduction, will now have to be implemented for hard coal, though this was opposed by the UK, Italy, Poland, France, Spain and Ireland;
- The EEB failed to convince the group to reflect performance levels of <85mg/Nm^3 for lignite-fired LCPs and fluidised bed hard coal, but they will be recognised as BAT;
- Attempts to water down limits for and to introduce a specific derogation for sulphur were fought off and that option is now definitively closed for indigenous solid hard coal with high sulphur content;
- On dust, marginal improvements were achieved;
- Mercury emissions limits in water were tightened marginally with only Belgium actively supporting tightening limits for other water pollutants as well;
- Greece and France fought hard to relax limits for SO2 and dust from big engines fired with heavy fuel oils located on islands;
- Despite relaxations lobbied for by Ireland and Finland, peat burning will also be indirectly restricted compared to status quo requirements.

Following these decisions, the European Commission is expected to bring forward an updated proposal to the Industrial Emissions Directive Forum, with formal adoption through comitology at the beginning of next year, followed by publication in the EU Official Journal by mid-2016. From the date of publication, permit writers will need to ensure compliance with the updated requirements within a maximum of four years. The EEB wants publication of the final standards in the EU Journal to be fast-tracked so that they are published by the beginning of 2016 and trigger emission reductions as soon as possible.

We are also calling for special treatments linked to reduced operating hours to be removed. Every additional delay and relaxation of the rules means additional life years lost due to avoidable pollution as we have shown in a health study[4] we commissioned with Greenpeace. The EEB will continue to track this process to ensure a proper and ambitious implementation. •

Christian Schaible,
Senior Policy Officer,
Industrial Production

[4] Report by Mike Holland, commissioned by Greenpeace and the European Environmental Bureau (May 2015), Health and economic implications of alternative emission limits for coal-fired power plants in the EU

POPULATION: A DAMAGING TABOO

As a new member, I am impressed by the range and power of the EEB's advocacy, but as an environmentalist, I am saddened at the habitual omission of the 'P' word. I would love to see 'Population' given its due weight as a multiplier of almost every problem the EEB tackles.

Three obvious facts:

1. Total human impact on (finite) planet = average impact per person multiplied by number of people.
2. Natural resources per person = total (dwindling) resources divided by number of people.
3. So stable or reducing populations are an essential (though far from sufficient) condition for any sustainable society. As we say, "it is no use reducing your footprint if you keep increasing the number of feet".

Population is not just a developing country issue. The UN projects that by 2050 there will be somewhere between 74 million more and 54 million fewer people in the EU. Obviously it would be much easier to provide sustainable food, water and energy for the lower number, and fewer people would produce less CO2, pollution, waste and habitat destruction.

The Global Footprint Network estimates that there are already some 200 million more Europeans than can be sustained (at current consumption levels and technology) by our own renewable ecological services. So we take these services from other countries or from our natural capital, spending our and their children's inheritance to maintain our comfortable lifestyle. Every additional Briton, for instance, has the carbon footprint of 22 Malawians.

And so why do so many environmental NGOs feel nervous about discussing this?

Apart from ideological objections from the hard left and religious right, there is a deluded but widespread idea that wanting to stabilise human numbers implies racism – old white men telling young black women to have fewer babies, and blaming them for their poverty if they do not. Nonsense. There are 225 million women in the world with an unmet need for contraception – they do not want more children but cannot get family planning services and so suffer coercive pregnancy (from which many die). About 40% of pregnancies worldwide are unwanted, and every poor mother knows that her children will be better fed if there are three rather than 10 of them.

Keeping the number of children in each family below three is also a pre-condition for economic take-off, and hugely beneficial for maternal and child health. Contraception to reduce future energy demand is far more cost-effective than using renewables to increase supply, and preventing an unwanted pregnancy abates an entire lifetime of emissions plus those of descendants in perpetuity. Sixty-seven countries have population-stabilisation policies, and only China's is coercive.

Another unthinking response to population concern is to attribute the problem not to population, but instead to blame over-consumption, distribution or capitalism, for instance, as if there is only one problem. But population is the multiplier, with consumption, of all the others. Deliberately ignoring it is a silent lie – implying that the world can be made prosperous and sustainable regardless of human numbers.

England is now the most crowded country in Europe. Eighty per cent of its inhabitants would prefer a smaller population, yet we are promised somewhere between seven and 46 more Manchesters by 2050. Population Matters' top priority is therefore to stabilise the UK population and then reduce it by voluntary means to a sustainable level. The EEB would be doing the world a favour if it set the same aim for Europe. •

Roger Martin
Chair, Population Matters
www.populationmatters.org

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

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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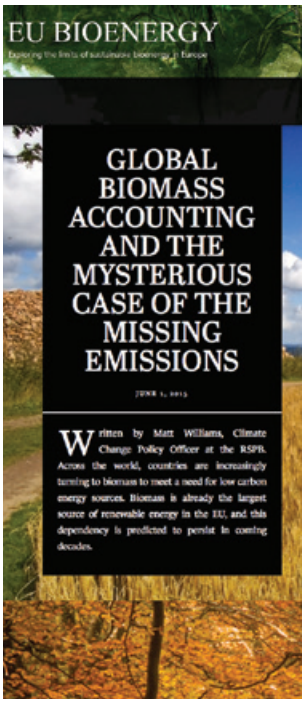

NGOs CALL FOR REFORM OF ALL EU BIOENERGY POLICIES

As the EU finally decided to limit the share of food-based biofuels to 7% of the energy used in transport at the end of April, the EEB and nine other NGOs called on policymakers to fix the rest of its bioenergy policies. Our policy recommendations focus on the EU's climate policy framework post 2020 and call for: a cap on the share of bioenergy in the renewable energy mix based on what can be produced sustainably; resource efficient biomass use; honest carbon accounting; and environmental safeguards for all bioenergy supported by EU policies. •

Stay tuned to the EU's bioenergy policy debate and follow: **EUbioenergy.com** and **#EUBioenergy**

Sini Eräjää,
EU Bioenergy Policy Officer

FEATURED PUBLICATION

Three Priorities for a Surge in Energy Savings

With Europe about to reform the well-known EU energy label for home and office appliances, this briefing points policymakers towards prime areas for improvement and a surge of fresh energy savings.

COMING AND GOING

LONG SERVICE

Mara Silina, Aarhus and Enlargement Programme Coordinator, has retired after 15 years with the EEB. Throughout that time, she coordinated the pan-European network of NGOs active in the Aarhus Convention processes. Good luck Mara!

DEVELOPING AND COMMUNICATING

Emma Ernsth started in April as the EEB's Development Officer, but is no stranger to the organisation having previously worked as the EEB's Conference Manager from May 2014 – January 2015.

The EEB's communications team is growing. **Philippa Nuttall Jones** joined in May as Senior Communications Officer, having previously worked on climate change communications and as a journalist for many years. And **Emily Macintosh** is now Communications Officer for Nature and Agriculture, having been press officer at the GUE group in the European Parliament.

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

Aliki Kriekouki became part of the EEB team in March as Technical Officer (Industrial Production). Previously, she worked for a European waste management federation, as an environmental auditor and at the European Commission's Executive Agency for SMEs.

Richard Filcak will be joining the Global Sustainability Policy unit as Policy Officer for Aarhus and neighbouring countries at the end of August, bringing a wealth of experience from more than 15 years with non-governmental organisations in the Central and Eastern Europe.

Balázs Horvath will come onboard in late August as Water Policy Officer. He has worked for 16 years on environmental and climate-related issues - most recently on water protection matters at the Commission.