



TRANSFORMATION TRACKER

Towards a Green and Social One-Planet Economy

What happened in 2025?

Multiple forces led systematic attacks against civil society and the backlash against the European Green Deal, weakening environmental and social protections and the EU's flagship commitment. Foreign interference and disinformation by US and Russian forces fuel anti-regulatory ideology and pressure, anti-EU sentiment, and, together with short-term business profit motives, eclipse science, citizens' voices, and commitments to protect people's health, climate and the environment, rendering the EU less resilient.

2025 was a dark year for the environment: the attacks on civil society and the European Green Deal from some members of the European Parliament and in the press across EU member states have been unrelenting. Disinformation campaigns fed by Russia, the US and internal actors poisoned and distorted EU processes, weakening governance. Intense lobbying by polluting EU industries and intense US lobbying to avoid US companies facing responsibilities in the EU led to clear cases of deregulation and weakening the EU, a stated aim of the new US administration. The omnibus went beyond simplification and embraced deregulation, eroding predictability and regulatory certainty, rewarding the laggards and undermining industry leaders. This weakens the emergence of European industry leaders in the green tech transition.

The EU must chart its own path, independent of fossil fuels and materials, and resistant to US political forces. The simplification agenda revealed itself to be increasingly a deregulation agenda. LIFE, the only dedicated instrument for the environment, was lost in the MFF proposal, and so was ringfencing for nature. There is only weaker climate and environment mainstreaming and a risk of a race to the bottom. The picture is one of an EGD, democracy and the European project itself under attack.

While Ursula von der Leyen's Political Guidelines reaffirmed the commitment to the European Green Deal and the Heads of States and Government recognised the need to tackle the triple crisis, the power struggle has changed course towards deregulation, despite scientific evidence that the climate crisis is only getting worse, ecosystem health and biodiversity are being degraded, and exposure to chemicals and pollution that are impacting families across the EU.

Keep looking at the evidence and facts in a post-truth world: The Planetary Health Check 2025 noted that 7 of 9 planetary boundaries have been passed. In October 2025, scientists declared that the World's First Climate Tipping Point Has Been Crossed. The EEAs Europe's environment and climate: knowledge for resilience, prosperity and sustainability 2025 report highlighted the clear deterioration of nature, climate, and health. It concluded that, in many areas, policies will not be adequate to address the challenges or meet the commitments made by the Commission, Parliament, and Council. There is no scientific case for walking back social and environmental protections, but rather a clear case for strengthened policy implementation and additional measures to meet the commitments and strengthen resilience in the changing world.

In these dark times, there are pockets of hope – renewable energies have become ever more affordable and far cheaper than fossil fuels and nuclear, with the potential to save many households considerable money. The Commission's Civil Society Strategy and EP May Plenary vote recognised the importance of civil society in Europe. Despite the emergence of a post-truth world, more evidence is being produced and studied. Courts in the Netherlands and France stood up for climate and environmental justice. The Polish Council Presidency's focus on disinformation highlighted Russia's interests in unravelling the EGD. The Danish Presidency's support for PFAS blood tests and Council Conclusions on Europe's Environment 2030 demonstrated a commitment to scientific evidence and motivation. Engagement makes a difference.

In May 2024, after more than a year of extensive consultation, the EEB launched the European Pact for the Future: A Green and Social Deal for a One-Planet Economy, signed by over 300 organisations. The Pact argues for a continued and broadened transformation to address environmental, social and economic needs and tackle the triple climate-nature-pollution crisis and embrace opportunities of change.

This Tracker assesses each of the twelve priorities of the European Pact for the Future – identifying areas of progress, missed opportunities or failures to advance, and where things went backwards in 2025. It also presents policy needs for 2026.





Priority

What went well in 2025?

What was a missed opportunity?

What went badly in 2025?

Specific priorities for 2026?

1. Commit to a green and social deal for a one-planet economy

The Danish Presidency Council Conclusions on Europe's Environment 2030 requested the Commission present a legislative proposal for post-2025 to maintain 8EAP ambition & meet Commission, Parliament & Council commitments.

The EU's top-level agenda (CWP & SOTEU) pivoted away from the Green Deal, with weak social integration, no just transition support, and limited attention to biodiversity and pollution.

The EP power balance shifted with the Omnibus I, with MEPs voting (EPP together with far-right parties ID, ECR, PSE) to raise thresholds for CSRD & CSDDD, reducing the number of companies responsible for due diligence.

Embrace an independent EU agenda that resists foreign & corporate interference. Halt deregulation, reconfirm support for env & social protections, advance gender equality. Support engagement in the transformation or expect a public backlash.

2. Fully address the linked triple planetary climate, biodiversity, and pollution crises (and address health)

Climate: The EU secured agreement to continue climate action beyond 2030, maintaining its commitment to climate neutrality for 2050.

The weak 2040 target was a missed opportunity to establish clear domestic mitigation paths & investment security. ETS-II uncertainty risks delaying household investment in EVs, heat pumps.

The partial dismantling of EU policies through 2030 (ETS II, fleet standards), place greater responsibility on MS to meet EU climate targets.

Maintain ambition & separate MS specific targets on EE, RE & strict monitoring of sector-specific climate progress to reach Fit-for-55 (2030) and 85+5 (2040) and hence ensure conditions for investments and energy independence.

Nature: updated water pollutant standards, new Soil Law and water resilience strategy. Nature & water law implementation is progressing.

Legal updates on soil & water pollutants much weaker than what science tells us is needed to protect our health and environment and continue facing coordinated disinformation campaigns.

The forest monitoring law was withdrawn, proposals to accelerate permitting removed crucial safeguards for nature & health, & wolf protection downgraded - a decision against science, reversing conservation success.

Resist pressures to weaken nature and water laws and push for their smart implementation, support an ambitious Ocean Act, and ensure that the Climate Adaptation Package promotes ecosystem-based climate solutions.

Pollution: EU clean-air policies are effectively reducing air pollution, with emissions cuts in SO2, PM2.5, NOx, NMVOCs, NH3.

Weak EU positioning in the Gothenburg Protocol ongoing revision, especially on methane and black carbon.

Despite NEC directive evaluation, no proposal was tabled for a post-2030 action, underlining the weakening of political commitment to the zero pollution ambition.

In the revised Gothenburg Protocol negotiations, expand the scope to include black carbon, methane and mercury, and ensure that the NEC Directive is revised.

Harmful chemicals: In the absence of EU PFAS progress, France banned PFAS in cosmetics, textiles, shoes, waterproofing agents and ski wax.

Delays to the REACH revision and PFAS restrictions.

Policy reflections on PFAS for industrial uses are on hold, with only progress on PFAS in products.

Launch a REACH revision that stays true to its environment and health objectives, encourages substitution to clean & safe chemicals. Ensure a broad universal PFAS restriction.

3. Reduce resource use and seize Circular Economy opportunities

EPR schemes for textiles mandatory from 2028 and first of its kind food waste reduction targets to be reached by 2030. Co-legislators also agreed on measures to make the automotive sector more circular.

Bioeconomy strategy does not prioritise sustainable material uses over its use for energy, and keeps door open to increased biomass imports. RESourceEU focused on securing primary raw materials, not on demand reduction or circularity.

Initial Commission vision for Circular Economy Act has circular economy mainly a 'recycling economy' & fails to recognise EU's systemic overproduction, overconsumption and overdependence on material extraction.

Circular Economy Act should focus on clear prioritisation of prevention, reuse and repair before recycling. clean & non-toxic material loops, and address overconsumption. Include binding targets for resource use reduction and material demand mitigation.

4. Support sectors in becoming resilient and competitive on sustainability

Industry: Forward-looking measures for industrial transformation were established in the IED legal framework but depend on corporate due diligence and MS setting strict permit conditions.

The Clean Industry Deal (CID) focused on decarbonisation, not zero pollution. The Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA) lost its decarbonisation focus, reducing industry investment certainty.

Environment Omnibus (VIII) weakened Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) 2.0 by dismantling core elements of business responsibilities: scrapping installation-level transformation plans and requirement for substitution assessment of hazardous chemicals.

Reject weakening provisions of Omnibus VIII on IED 2.0. Embrace an integrated approach on pollution prevention at source and internalising of external damage costs.

Food and Farming: The Council resisted EP attempts to weaken the Commission's CAP simplification proposal, limiting further damage.

Commission overlooked the Strategic Dialogue on the future of Agriculture. The CAP proposal does not accelerate the necessary transition.

The CAP simplification omnibus weakens environmental protection in agriculture (e.g. wetlands and peatlands).

New CAP proposal and Livestock Strategy to support farmers in the transition towards agroecology, sustainable animal numbers and strategic autonomy.

5. Drive system change through investments, fair taxation and distribution

Mainstreaming of the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principles (though with some problematic exemptions).

MFF 2nd Pillar a Competitiveness Fund (not Clean Competitiveness Fund): missed opportunity to signal decarbonisation & zero pollution ambition.

MFF: No real budget increase; insufficient EU own resources; weak social, climate and environmental objectives, no gender budgeting, no dedicated funding for nature and LIFE programme dismantling.

MFF should be increased and underpinned by progressive EU own resources, commit 50% mainstreaming for climate & environment, dedicated nature budget line, commit to the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, & just transition funding.

6. Make the safe and sustainable choice the easy choice

Availability of green products and services certified with the EU Ecolabel rose to an all-time high of almost 110 000.

While the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation and Construction Products Regulation could make more sustainable products the norm, their work plans for the coming years foresee only slow progress.

Commission threatened Green Claims withdrawal led to negotiations stalling, weakening consumers information, rewarding industry laggards and punishing leaders.

Public Procurement Directive revision to make procurement climate-neutral & increase green public procurement. Tackle the availability of illegally unsafe, unsustainable or toxic products on online sales portals.

7. Develop a new social contract to leave no one behind

Just Transition Directive and EU anti-poverty strategy with potential to address multidimensional aspects of poverty & structural inequalities.

Social justice measures and commitment to a Just Transition were largely absent from the EU high-level political agenda in 2025.

Worker safety and worker rights were weakened through austerity measures across many EU Member States. The Omnibus process threatens workers' rights across supply chains.

The EU should commit to a Just Transition Directive, EU anti-poverty strategy, and full implementation of the social climate fund & national climate plans to ensure no-one left behind.

8. Strengthen democracy, give a voice to youth and those too often forgotten

EU Civil Society Strategy & Democracy Shield gave clear political support to civil society. The Polish Presidency made tackling disinformation a priority, warning it was undermining European democracy.

Commitments in Civil Society Strategy are not matched by explicit financial commitment to support environmental citizens organisations.

High-level and constant attacks from some in the EP (EPP and far right) on civil society, seeking to undermine NGO legitimacy and ability to engage. The Commission's defence of civil society was too late and insufficiently clear to avoid damage from the attacks.

Strengthen environmental democracy through support for the Aarhus Convention & access to justice provisions in EU legislation. Ensure clear political & financial support for civil society – plurality of voices essential for a healthy democracy.

9. Support and manifest solidarity across an enlarging EU

EU & many MS standing strongly behind Ukraine, with enlargement (inc. Western Balkans) seen as a geostrategic investment & positive EU-UK reset.

Solidarity & Emergency Aid Reserve/EUSF suffered from long lags, visible in a severe 2025 wildfire season.

Enlargement credibility gaps (e.g. Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia) and some Member States obstructing measures against Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Stand firm with Ukraine and support Candidate Countries – fighting Russian disinformation, preparing for EU enlargement, investing and supporting in environmental and social transition.

10. Commit to global justice & drive partnerships

The EU engaged constructively in environment multilateralism (UNFCCC, UNEA...) against international pressures.

Agenda 2030 / SDGs were not an EU priority, which is a missed opportunity for multilateralism.

The EU's strength as a value-based global partner was weakened by changes to the CSRD/CSDDD and the EUDR postponement.

EU should commit to leadership on multilateralism, push for SDG implementation and drive work to create a post 2030 global agenda and find supporting partners.

11. Implement & enforce EU legislation to protect the rule of law & health

The Rule of Law Report 2025 reaffirmed the rule of law as a cornerstone of EU democracy.

The failure to put forward a proposal for the revision of the environmental liability directive undermined private enforcement of EU law.

Commission deprioritised infringement proceedings, letting MS off the hook (e.g. binding renewable energy targets) and weakening trust in rule of law commitments.

Give the EIR teeth by automatically linking it to infringement proceedings as a follow-up. Factor non-implementation into the MFF.

12. Strengthen EU governance and trust in the European Project

EP Plenary Vote in May and Commissioner statements confirming civil society importance to democracy and legitimacy of funding.

In Omnibuses, missed opportunities for public participation, undermining own governance standards under Better Regulation & civil society role.

Lack of impact assessments and sufficient public participation, ahead of many omnibus packages, despite findings of the Ombudswoman of maladministration, eroding public trust in the EU.

Maintain Better Regulation principle of public participation, and evidence-based IAs and consistency assessments for all major policy changes – factoring in costs of inaction.

2026 represents a fork in the road for EU leaders and policymakers. The EU could decide to be history-takers in the face of US and Russian pressures, political ideologies and short-term business profits and unravel the hard-fought-for social and environmental protections that will only reward laggards and punish industry leaders. Or the EU could be history-makers, embrace an agenda of agency and hope, and resist third country forces and commit convincingly to the transition towards fossil fuel independence, materials resilience, long-term competitiveness and quality jobs based on clean and safe products and one-health policies, international cooperation, multilateralism and the respect for the rule of law.

We urge the European Commission, Council and Parliament to embrace these Priorities in 2026:

- **Resist deregulation attempts and make simplification the engine of better implementation** – ensure simplification is about smarter implementation, not dismantling targets & obligations, ensure evidence-based simplification building on benefits of action and costs of inaction, and prioritise implementation & enforcement.
- **Secure a fit-for-purpose EU budget that enables a race to the top and sustainability** - Commit at least half to climate, biodiversity and social investments, defend LIFE and the Just transition fund, guarantee the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, and embed democratic participation and accountability.
- **Fight disinformation and defend civil society and democratic health** – quantify the threats, secure civil society space, develop a fact-checking portal, support good media balance, communicate scientific consensus and benefits of action.
- **Make Europe's industry a global leader in clean transformation – decarbonised, detoxified and restorative** – promote circular economy practices, ensure public health is addressed, and hazardous substances substituted (e.g. in IED), make permitting stronger and ambitious, and create lead markets for low emission products through Green Public Procurement.
- **Maintain the ambition towards a climate-neutral EU by 2050** – maintain the integrity of renewable energy targets and support accelerated roll out of renewables, put in place a robust regime of enforcement for the governance of the Energy Union; don't touch RED III, EED and EPBD in the Energy omnibus; prompt the just decarbonisation of buildings, and push ambitious national renovation plans.
- **Facilitate a transition towards sustainable, healthy, just food and farming systems** - design CAP that supports farmers in the transition to a resilient and economically, environmentally and socially sustainable agricultural system: ringfence funding for Agri-Ecological practices, help farmers in their transition to sustainable animal farming, and accelerate climate actions.
- **Deliver a nature-positive agenda for land, freshwater and oceans and fast-track climate adaptation and resilience** - maintain EU's nature and water laws' integrity, support the roll out of the nature restoration law, ensure the EUDR simplification maintains it as a tool to halt deforestation globally, support an ambitious EU's Water Resilience Strategy, insist that the nitrates directive is fit for purpose, and zero tolerance for non-compliance of the nitrates directive. Strengthen the Oceans Pact and introduce binding noise-reduction targets and ecosystem-based adaptation.
- **Deliver on zero pollution for air and noise to protect people's health and the environment** – respect the Gothenburg Protocol and extend the scope of targets for 2035, 2040 to include black carbon, mercury and methane, comply with the Ambient Air Quality Directive, and secure full implementation of the existing National Emissions Ceiling reduction Commitments Directive. Revise the environmental noise directive and support zero-pollution ambition.
- **Ensure an environment free from harmful and toxic chemicals** – embrace a REACH revision maintaining health and environment objectives, introduce fast track restrictions for the most harmful chemicals, fight for PFAS restrictions across non-essential uses, ensure the Chemicals Industry Action Plan delivers a toxic-free, sustainable and socially beneficial chemical sector: support industry leaders, not laggards. Strengthen the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
- **Promote responsible resource use and harness circular economy opportunities** – use the Circular Economy Act to fast-track the shift to circularity, embracing reuse, repair, and remanufacture, translate the European Affordable Housing Plan into concrete policy actions that ensure social and environmental issues addressed together; ensure robust minimum criteria for durability, repairability and extended lifespans through the Ecodesign regulation, ensure that bioeconomy strategy restore rather than depletes ecosystems.
- **Demonstrate solidarity across the EU Member States and Candidates & global responsibility** – Support EU enlargement, readying legislation to be compatible with the EU acquis and green deal, and adopt focused cross-EU security and militarisation approaches taking wider security perspective into account, including ecocide.
- **Protect the Rule of Law and enhance Democratic Governance** - Support fundamental rights, including the universal right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, extend the mandate of the European Prosecutor's Office to include environmental crime, strengthen the Aarhus Convention's Compliance Committee and Rapid Response Mechanism, lead discussions on the environmental liability directive, and implement EU environmental law.

How can you engage in creating and delivering an Agenda of Hope?

Further reading: *On Results: The Polish and Danish Council Presidency assessments.*

On Priorities: EEB's Presidency Memorandum and "Ten Green Tests" for Cyprus; our Trio Poland, Denmark, Cyprus Presidency Memorandum with EEB's "Dozen Demands", and EEB's European Pact for the Future Action Plan for details.

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