EEB
European Environmental Bureau

LONG-TERM STRATEGY 2020-2030

Updated document following the 2025/26 mid-term review



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is the largest network of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe. We currently have over 190 member organisations in 42 countries representing some 30 million individual members and supporters. Our vision is for a better future where people and nature thrive together, and our mission is to advocate for progressive policies to create a better environment in the European Union and beyond.

Long-Term Strategy (LTS) 2026-2030: In 2019, after two years of consultation with members, the EEB launched its LTS 2020-2030. The updated LTS 2026-2030, agreed at the May 2026 AGM, is the product of over a year's consultation with EEB Members through our working groups, with all our members at the May 2025 EEB Strategy Forum: "CSOs at the Crossroads of a Changing World Order" and consultation with and input from EEB's Board and Council.

The first five years - 2020-2025: During the first half of our LTS, 2020-2025, the political climate supported the emergence of the European Green Deal (EGD), building on Ursula von der Leyen's launch of the EGD in June 2019 and following the climate strikes in 2018 and 2019. The EGD was, overall, a progressive agenda of hope and the most ambitious programme globally for the transition to a carbon-neutral, zero-pollution future with restored and protected nature, despite its limitations and gaps.

The EGD considered the climate marches led by young people, the voices of civil society and the science warning of the triple climate-nature-pollution crises. We communicated our members' call to address pollution impacts on human health and chemicals risks, the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem health, the needs for policy changes in food and farming systems, the climate crisis and opportunities of renewable energies, needs for phasing out fossil fuels, circular economy opportunities, fiscal measures, as well as to tackle social, economic and environmental justice and the rule of law. We also called for the continuation of the EGD when it faced forces seeking to instrumentalise defining moments for our societies – first the COVID epidemic and then the Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a blow to European security and stability. Our voice was heard.

The political context changed: With the farmers' strikes, the business-backed Antwerp declaration, Russian disinformation and growing deregulatory pressures from the US and within Europe and the 2024 European Parliament elections, political support for the EGD weakened. A deregulatory push-back gathered momentum. The science did not change; if anything, the evidence became ever clearer with worsening heat waves and mounting evidence of PFAS health impacts, to name only two. Disinformation, however, became the norm. At the same time, civil society faced attacks by the right and far right now also from within the European Parliament and the media outlets across Europe supported the disinformation-fuelled playbook aimed at weakening civil society to undermine environmental and social protections, European decision-making and the European project itself.

The geopolitical context changed further and fundamentally with the US administration's threats to take over Greenland and its war on Iran, both in violation of international law, leading to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, as well as mounting pressure for EU military spending. Russia continues its war on Ukraine, with military confrontation risking spilling across the EU. Prioritisation of competition over collaboration in a world of unfair trade practices and ever deeper wealth imbalances shift the political narrative, too.

Together, these led to a shift towards short-term priorities despite the science, despite the silent majority supporting action on climate and the environment and despite fundamental security risks stemming from the triple climate-nature-pollution crises. More details are given in **Part A: Setting the scene.**

A revised LTS: In this more difficult context for progressive EU policies, the EEB committed to three new strategic, overarching priorities: avoiding deregulation by ***defending rules that protect***, tackling disinformation by ***building resilience to disinformation,*** and securing civil society space for a resilient EU, by ***strengthening civil society space for a vibrant democracy*** (see **Part B)**. We are also addressing the environmental implications of militarisation on the one hand and of the AI boom on the other hand, given how fundamental these topics are for shaping today's world. And a fundamental red thread across all our activities is to integrate gender equality, social justice and decoloniality perspectives across our thematic work.

The thematic priorities remain those of the previously adopted LTS for this decade, though the strategic objectives and proposed actions for the priority areas have been updated to reflect the changing opportunities for policy change. These include:

- European Institutions and Governance
- Environmental Law and Justice
- Global and Regional Policies
- Economic Transition
- Agriculture and Food
- Biodiversity, Water and Soil
- Circular Economy
- Climate
- Chemicals
- Mercury
- Zero Pollution Industry
- Air Quality and Noise

For each theme, we present the context, our strategy, priorities, activities, and the Theory of Change **(Part C)**.

Our overarching Theory of Change (ToC), presented below, has been revised considering the new political and geopolitical context. It is to be read from left to right as a sequence of cause and effect, actions (yellow hexagons) aim for intermediate results – from uniting and mobilising members to engaging in policy processes, to ensuring implementation of policy commitments to achieving the just transition (blue boxes), with several causal steps. It also notes which threats will be addressed (purple boxes) and contribute to our overall objectives for a healthy environment and the wellbeing of people for current and future generations (green & blue ovals).

Operational priorities on communications, membership, partnerships, governance, events, staff and organisations, as well as fundraising and development approaches, are presented in **Part D**.

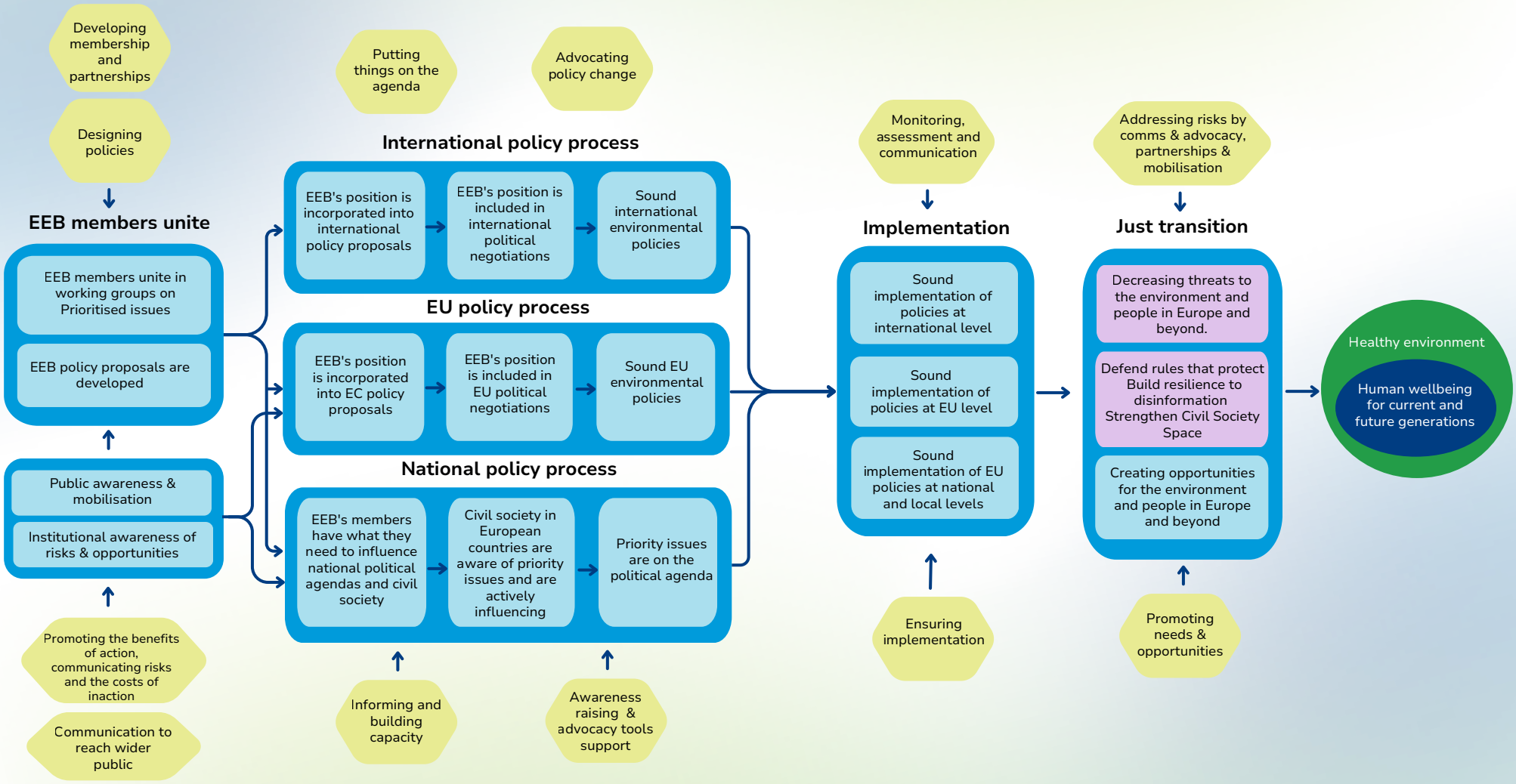
With thanks: We would like to thank funders for their trust and invaluable support and partner organisations for their work with us to make the change we need happen for people and nature to thrive together. This will help us move from the climate of fear and anxiety to an agenda of hope and agency that addresses people's rights and concerns, builds on scientific reality and works constructively with stakeholders and decision-makers across political affiliations seeking to build a better future.

Patrick ten Brink
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Deputy Secretary General, EEB



THEORY OF CHANGE: THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU



EEB supports transparency. The updated LTS for 2026-2030 is publicly available here, and the thematic chapters are presented individually too.

Success is collective: We are only as good as our successful collaborations. To work together, please get in touch! Check out How to Join! or contact our membership team directly on membership.team@eeb.org

Read more about how to support us with an individual donation and about our funding structure, press and communications work, and for policy collaboration.

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OUR ROLE IN
A CHANGING WORLD

ABOUT US

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is the largest network of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe. We currently have over 190 member organisations in 42 countries representing some 30 million individual members and supporters.

VISION

A better future where people and nature thrive together.

The next generation deserves a healthy planet. We believe in a world where equal, just, peaceful and democratic societies can prosper. A world with rich biodiversity and a safe climate. A world where laws and policies promote health and wellbeing while respecting nature. We believe that Europe has a crucial role to play in building this future.

MISSION

We are the largest and most inclusive European network of environmental citizens' groups – and the only one that works on such a broad range of issues.

We advocate for progressive policies to create a better environment in the European Union and beyond.

VALUES

The EEB stands for sustainable development, environmental justice, global equity, transparency and participatory democracy. We promote the principles of prevention, precaution and 'polluter pays'.

Our values:

- **Democracy:** We are a representative and inclusive organisation
- **Fairness:** We are committed to justice, equality and non-discrimination
- **Respect:** We provide an enabling, nurturing work culture that inspires excellence
- **Integrity:** We advocate policies based on science and communicate with honesty
- **Sustainability:** We strive to practice what we preach, applying green principles to our work.

OUR CHANGING WORLD: Our three overarching topics

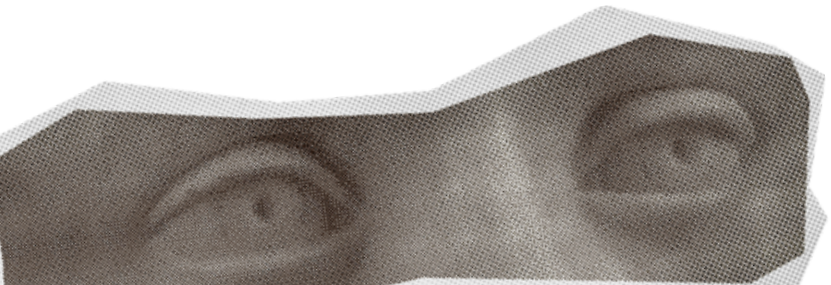
LOOKING BACK AT THE LAST FIVE YEARS

The first five years of our 2020–2030 Long Term Strategy were remarkable: the EEB was able to bring the voice of civil society into the heart of EU decision-making, offering the combined insights of citizen groups across Europe on the challenges ahead and the solutions needed to accelerate the transition towards a future where people and nature thrive together. EU institutions and most Member States showed a willingness to engage with evidence, listen to concerns, and work with stakeholders to shape the way forward. The European Green Deal (EGD) emerged as a transformative agenda - the first of its kind globally in scale and ambition, developed in a spirit of pluralism, science-based policymaking and broad participation. Under its umbrella, many historic milestones were agreed, such as the EU Climate Law, with its binding commitment to climate neutrality by 2050 and the extensive legislative package that followed, the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Farm to Fork Strategy or the Nature Restoration Law, the first continent-wide framework of its kind.

These advances sit alongside other progressive policies that are already delivering tangible benefits. Renewable energy has expanded rapidly across much of the EU, strengthening energy autonomy and reducing vulnerability to volatile fossil fuel prices. Air quality has continued its long-term improvement, contributing to a significant decline in early mortality. Eco-labelled products, efficient appliances and organic foods have become increasingly accessible, helping make sustainable choices easier for millions of Europeans.

At the same time, the EGD was never the only solution. It accelerated parts of the transition but did not complete it, and important areas still lack the regulatory attention they urgently require - from chemical pollution to unsustainable resource use, from an agrifood system that remains largely incompatible with planetary boundaries to the EU's continued dependence on imported energy, materials and feed, which leaves the region structurally reliant on resources extracted elsewhere. Many of the successes we celebrate today, such as cleaner air and the growth of ecolabelling, are the result of decades of work predating the EGD and demonstrate the value of sustained, long-term environmental ambition. EEB's contribution included technical input on ecolabelling and sharing citizens' concerns on air pollution that were welcomed, heard and often heeded, with due benefits to people across Europe.

While the EGD, building on earlier environmental protections, represents an unprecedented step forward for environmental ambition in the EU, it has not been a truly holistic strategy for long-term sustainability. Its key measures were rolled out without addressing the structural inequalities that shape people's ability to participate in and benefit from the transition, such as persistent in-work poverty, precarious employment, unaffordable housing, insufficient investment in public transport, and underfunded health and education systems. Furthermore, the EGD remained heavily centred on decarbonisation, leaving the EU's exceptionally high per capita resource use largely untouched. As a result, the package did not fully align Europe's economic model with the need to operate within planetary boundaries or ensure a just and equitable transition for all.



COVID AND WAR

In the same period, COVID struck, and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine changed history. While some instrumentalised COVID to argue for the EGD to be weakened, European leaders stayed strong, the commitment to a positive transition was maintained, indeed accelerated with the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). At the EEB, we launched Turning Fear to Hope: Corona Crisis Measures to help build a better future in 2020 to argue for the maintenance of the EGD and to accelerate the transition.

With the war on Ukraine, arguments again emerged, some seeking to undermine the EGD and more progressive environmental, climate and food policies. Others recognised that fossil fuel reliance on Russia was a lose-lose, leading to not just human tragedy and security concerns, but fossil fuels becoming a security risk, there was a dramatic loss of availability of natural gas and painful price hikes for households and industry.

EU policies on renewable energies accelerated the roll out of renewables, and households across many Member States invested in solar power, battery storage and heat pumps to help. While the energy aspects of the EGD stayed strong, priorities started to shift, and when the farmers' strikes hit Brussels and various capitals, valuable laws on nature and sustainability were sacrificed to placate farmers and industry lobby groups supporting them, even though this would not fix the real problems for farmers; livelihoods in Europe. The Farm to Fork strategy was lost, pesticide regulation was withdrawn and nature laws undermined. European business lobbied to engage in efforts to weaken legislation to protect short-term interests, at the cost of the long term. EEB warned of these risks in our New Leaf article: Ukraine War Underlines Urgency of EU Green Food Goals.

A NEW GLOBAL REALITY

In recent years, the geopolitical reality has shifted even more fundamentally. Russian disinformation sought to undermine progressive policies in the EU, including an acceleration of the green and just transition. Russia's invasion of Ukraine continued its macabre march, shifting Europe's attention towards defence and preparedness. The lack of accountability for Israel's actions in Gaza, recognised as amounting to genocide, seriously undermined trust in international law and in the EU's willingness and ability to act decisively in the face of mass suffering. The new US administration's arrival announced efforts to end multilateralism, marked by excessive national self-interest, and pushed massive lobbying to undermine EU laws that may affect American companies, while the EU's leadership has struggled to take a clear distance from this US government. To share three examples of EEB initiatives to respond to the changing world order:

- EEB commented on the changing world order, the threats and risks to progressive policy and argued that the EU stay resolute and champion a credible green transition: The Emerging New World Order and Europe's Choice.
- EEB, together with partners SDG Watch Europe, Solidar and the European Youth Forum, supported by 77 other civil society organisations, in the face of the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, called for an immediate ceasefire, solidarity with Ukraine, and end all Russian fossil fuel imports and commit to accelerating the path to full independence from fossil fuels.
- An opinion piece on A Just and Sustainable Future for All: Why European Leaders Must Act on Gaza.

Unfortunately, the US launched a series of attacks on Iran, in violation of international law, in a fragile, conflict-prone situation in the Middle East. The attack made energy prices skyrocket, affecting all parts of the globe, particularly those reliant on fossil fuels.



Conflict, the weaponisation of energy and price rises pose immense risks to the EU, which had to learn the hard way that its dependence on Russian oil and gas came at the high price of political helplessness and socioeconomic fragility, while then creating another lock-in by sealing a deal with the US administration for LNG imports. While there has been progress on ending fossil fuel imports and advances on renewables in Europe, there has been far too slow an accelerating the path to end fossil fuels in most countries, as can be seen now by the collateral impacts of the war in Iran. European phase out from fossil fuels, and hence political agency in a scattered multipolar world, remains essential. The same is also true for food, as we saw in response to the Russian attacks on Ukraine. Instead of accelerating the implementation of the EGD, which was the best possible reply to strengthen our resilience, the EU stopped progress. Therefore, we remain extremely vulnerable to shocks due to our strong dependency on feed and fertiliser imports, as illustrated during the closing of the Strait of Hormuz.

CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER ATTACK AND A NEW POLITICAL REALITY

In several EU Member States, and in many countries around the world, the situation for civil society has been deteriorating for many years, including in countries such as Russia, Hungary and Serbia, but also in long-standing democracies such as France and Germany, where civic space is now considered as being 'obstructed'. What is particularly worrying is that in the last years, coordinated and concerted efforts came from political groups within the European Parliament itself to undermine the legitimacy, role and funding for civil society. These were fuelled by disinformation and false narratives and sought to undermine the voices of those seeking to strengthen environmental and social protections, justice, rights and democracy.

Political voices within the European Parliament who do not share the critical views of citizens' environmental organisations led to attacks in and through the press, and support for civil society weakened, despite evidence that the criticisms were concocted and had no basis in fact. The aim of these attacks is to damage the reputation of critical civil society and to weaken, indeed try to muzzle, the voices of citizens' organisations in the democratic process. Nationally too, governments in several countries cut back on support for NGOs – for their participation, engagement in decision making and funding. Citizens' rights to protect were also curtailed in a range of countries.

Many of the measures taken are those of an authoritarian playbook, seeking to undermine not only civil society, but also progressive environmental, social and economic policy, wider regulatory protections, weaken independent facts and press, and seek to undermine the European project itself.

Times have fundamentally changed. The 2024 European Parliament elections have altered the political landscape. While there is still potential for a progressive centre, the stronger far-right parties and weakened progressive parties have led to a dominant European People's Party (EPP) that can choose whether to make policies with the far right or with the centre and progressive parties. The new reality is often one of a change of direction by the EPP relative to its position in the last EP, and antagonism to the EGD, with exceptions, even though measures for decarbonisation, zero pollution and nature restoration offer benefits to supporters across all political parties.



Civil society, however, responded to fight to save civil society space, legitimacy and a resilient democracy, as well as push back against disinformation tools and those seeking a post-truth world where protections are harder to maintain. Examples of EEB's response (see also later chapters on these new priorities of EEB's work) include:

- **On civil society attacks:** We led the push back for the entire community benefitting from EU LIFE Programme operating grants, informed wider civil society of the risks (and that not only for environmental NGOs), coordinated, and engaged with the media. EEB co-organised specific press events with partners to address the disinformation underlying the civil society attacks, combined with one-to-one discussions with the media, developing and sharing a Q&A on the attacks with LIFE beneficiaries and EEB members, and the press helped flip the script. An increasing number of journalists, particularly those investigating the background of the attack, recognised that the attacks on civil society were politically motivated and not based on evidence and facts.
- **On disinformation:** the level of information bias in social media and the press is deeply concerning. EEB's commitment to push into broader social media, prompted by insights 41-51% of young people said that social media creators were their major source of news, was the first among European-wide civil society. EEB invested in having a TikTok presence with weekly posts, ramped up our activities on Instagram, and building also on EEB's LinkedIn account, has led to millions of engagements and likes, reaching new audiences and putting environmental facts out there to counterbalance misleading information. EEB has been an influencer itself. EEB's New Leaf newsletter has more than tripled in subscribers and now counts over 30,000 with access to weekly policy update (see also the Communications chapter below).

EUROPE FACES A CHOICE

Policy making is the art of the possible, and with the current competition for policy attention and money, many argue that less can and should be done on the environment. Security is a top priority now. European industry is struggling with competition from China and US policies – competitiveness has become a key concern. But these do not need to be seen as in opposition to the environment, which is also, as facts day by day of flooding, fires, coastal erosion, cancers, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, fertility loss, weakening of our immune systems, species loss, ecosystem degradation, soil erosion, and productivity loss. The evidence on the risks is clear. We have communicated systematically on this, one example being:

- EEB, together with partners CHEMSEC and the Danish Environment Minister, carried out PFAS blood tests at the informal meeting of environmental ministers in Denmark in July 2025, with twenty four leads from twenty four countries, as well as the European Commission's Environment Commissioner doing a blood test to see the facts for themselves of the level of harmful chemicals in their blood stream. We were impressed by the level of commitment to scientific facts.

Security in Europe and the world needs to be thought as human security, beyond military security. It is about water resilience and health soil that produce good food. It is about a phase out from fossil fuels - imagine a world 100% renewables, with smart grids, electrification, energy efficiency, sufficiency, savings from circular economy and reduced resource use. There would be less incentive or ability to wage wars.



Human security is also about addressing the climate-nature-pollution crisis, given the risks from climate change, for ecosystem degradation and collapse, from exposure to pollutants and harmful chemicals. Finally, human security is also about trustworthy and transparent decision-making and insitutions.

European autonomy would also be supported by the shift to clean energy, to a full circular economy, moving way beyond the current level where 90% of our materials are thrown away with value lost.

Industrial policy for innovation and jobs for the future is about ensuring Europe has a strong and sustainable industry in 2040, 2050, that can provide us with what is needed to live well and offers decent work in the jobs of the future, and for that opportunities are vast for clean tech, for clean and safe chemicals, for healthy ecosystems providing ecosystems services to all of Europe, communities to companies to citizens.

- On security, we developed, together with our members, the position paper Security for People and Planet: Rethinking EU Defence and Security Policy in the Age of Climate and Environmental Crisis, which argued that EU defence and security policy needs to be based on a holistic understanding of human security, that the long-term environmental and social harm caused by conflict should be recognised as should the weaponisation of energy, access to clean water, agriculture and food, raw materials and risks of ecocide.



- And recognising the interconnectedness of various priorities, EEB developed and in 2024 presented The European Pact for the Future: A Green and Social Deal for a One Planet economy, build up over two years and signed by over 400 organisations and 1300 individuals. This was a commitment far beyond an environment only agenda; it embraced the social dimension, the need for business transformation. It is about a connected environment-social-sustainable economy agenda. It is about justice, solidarity, good governance, responsibilities and implementing promises so that youth and future generations can have hope.

We stand by this agenda now more than ever, especially now that EU policy is arguably facing a reset, the extent of which remains unclear. There is still high-level commitment to the European Green Deal by the Commission President and some Commissioners, the Heads of State recognised the triple climate-nature-pollution crisis, and some Member States through the Council and their own measures, often push for progressive policies.

- To communicate and share what developments really have been EEB not only comments policy by policy over the year (see EEB's webpage and LinkedIn), looking at what went well and where praise is due, what were missed opportunities, what went badly, and what priorities should be for the year ahead. EEB's Transformation Tracker presents a summary of a difficult picture, with several things going well, many missed opportunities for progress, and unfortunately far too many cases of things going badly – overall underlining the need for progressive measures in 2026 and beyond. The EEA's Europe's environment and climate: knowledge for resilience, prosperity and sustainability 2025 report also presents a picture of insufficient progress.



It is fair to say that it could have been worse, of course, and EEB's intense engagement (Secretariat team and members), together with partners, helped avoid that happening. Additional examples of initiatives that helped include:

- On deregulation: EEB immediately warned of the risks of deregulation and organised a press briefing soon after the deregulation agenda started, explaining what was happening and what it meant for EU citizens / we engaged with companies and businesses. EEB targeted the competitiveness council, managing to get some good wording there in their discussions. We have continued to systematically warn of the risks of the simplification agenda leading to deregulation, with engagement on this at the informal meeting of environmental ministers, in the environmental omnibus roundtable, where we underlined that deregulation would undermine industry leaders and reward laggards, and systematic sharing of evidence on the omnibus packages with members and partners helped raise the bar to those wishing to weaken legislation. See the chapter on this priority further below, noting what our commitment to actions are.
- Together with partners BirdLife Europe, ClientEarth, and WWF EU, we launched the "Hands off Nature" campaign, which reached almost 200,000 citizen submissions in 2025 to stop the weakening of EU nature and water laws (Birds & Habitats Directives, Water Framework Directive, etc.) , linked to the European Commission Call for Evidence linked to the environmental "Omnibus". In 2026, the Hands Off Nature campaign reached nearly a million signatures. It could have been worse.

While we are comforted that things are not worse, we lament the steps back in health and environmental protections. We fear that without considerable effort by champions across institutions, cities and regions, progressive business, academic, civil society, households, and individuals, it could get much worse, with major costs to households, communities, and industry from insufficient action.

The simplification of omnibuses, in principle, could support policies by making it easier to implement commitments, which is part of the objective, and hence help close the implementation gap, which is costing the EU economy 180 billion EUR/year. But the risks are of, and already evidence of this leading to, deregulation, which will lead to rewarding the laggards and punishing the leaders committed to building a sustainable future. We need a strong, clean industry in Europe, and they need clarity, predictability and incentives for the transition, not a rollback of laws.

We hope to be wrong in this fear for the future, and we are committed to doing what we can to protect the environmental and social protections and hence support citizens being able have access to clean drinking water, clean rivers, not worry about toxic chemicals undermining their or their children's health, having confidence that products are safe, quality, repairable, that the courts will ensure their rights protected and justice delivered. We commit to listening to the voices of all citizens and communicating the concerns, the hopes and the needs. We also commit to engage with, and support progressive business and farmers committed to agri-ecological measures, and help Europe become a resilient leader in sustainability, and supporting multilateralism and the rule of law.

In these times of fear, Europe has a unique opportunity to create and embrace and champion an agenda of hope, where the ecological transition, social dimension and economic development take into account the interconnected benefits of action, costs of inaction and realise the many multiple synergies. In the current, fast changing world order, Europe has a chance and responsibility to champion multilateralism and the rule of law and resist the law of the strongest-takes-all.

The EU can and should champion the ecological and social transition, in collaboration with like-minded countries across the world. The EU would benefit by "Brand EU" being about values, quality, justice, sustainability, fair partnerships globally.

This seems like a big ask, utopian even, but the alternative is unimaginable, unacceptable. The science is clear on the ever-growing risks of the triple climate-nature-pollution crisis, the facts are evidence despite attempts to push a post-truth world as the norm, and citizens still care about health, climate and environment.

We, as part of the environmental and climate movements, are committed to work with all like-minded stakeholders who wish to chart this way forward, from any democratic party, from any sector of the economy willing to do better, from any country and community sharing a vision for a better future. We invite you to read what we want to do and reach out to us to work together to do what is in our collective reach to change constructively.

EEB'S REINFORCED COMMITMENTS

EEB's updated Long Term Strategy (see page 18 on the mid-term assessments) presents our updated vision and commitment to contribute to this wider movement, this vision of hope. Recognising the challenges, we have three new overarching priorities: (a) **Defending rules that protect**: Fighting deregulation to have legislation as part of a wider set of instruments to protect peoples' rights and needs; (b) **Building resilience to disinformation**: to avoid false news and fake news biasing decision making; and (c) **Strengthening civil society space for a vibrant democracy**: to ensure citizens have a voice, that it will be heard and that democracy has a chance to shine in this complicated world. These affect all our work.

As in the original LTS, here we have chapters on all our policy areas, from air quality to zero pollution industry, each updated to take into account the emerging scientific facts, the political windows of opportunity, and needs – with Theories of Change explaining what we are committed to doing to have what impacts and address risks and contribution to which objectives (see EEB's theory of change (ToC) after this section, and ToCs in each thematic chapter).

CHANGING FOCUS TO ADAPT TO A CHANGING CONTEXT

The nature of EEB's work is evolving to meet the changing needs. Historically, most of our effort was on advocacy for progressive policy. Over the last two years, we have spent a lot of time on a defensive agenda (fighting against the attacks on civil society, working to avoid the omnibuses becoming a deregulation agenda). We also realised that we need to reach wider audiences, not just the converted – and we invested extensively in our social media and digital communication channels, with some very encouraging successes, but with much more to do.

The balance of where we at the EEB put our focus across these eight areas will depend on the policy fields, but clearly, we need a balance across areas, and flexibility to context, to be as effective as we can be to deliver the voices of civil society groups and the 30 million citizens we represent. We look forward to working with members and partners on adaptive strategies to the fast-evolving world.
For more details on EEB's activities and impacts, see annual reports 2025, 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021 & 2020.


EEB'S STRATEGIC FOCUS 2026-2030
across priority areas in response to the evolving state of the environment, political context and wider challenges
Policy Advocacy: New Opportunities
Motivating through proof of benefits of action & costs of inaction
Supporting implementation (across MS)
Encouraging progress through positive impacts & cases
Promoting an Agenda of Hope, positive impacts & news
Changing the narrative, changing minds
Strong communications: raising awareness (institutions, press & public)
Reaching new audiences
Partnership engagement with social partners & wider stakeholders
Engaging wider voices
Environment movement mobilisation
Making people's voices heard
Support membership capacity & resilience
Defending Env & Social protections & civil society space (EU &MS)
Reducing risks of deregulation
Supporting civil society space & healthy democracy

About this strategy and the mid-term review

This update of the EEB 10-year Long-Term Strategy (LTS) is the result of an extensive 18-month Mid-term review process. The original LTS 2020–2030, adopted in 2019, also followed an extensive, participatory consultation process launched in 2018 and included a commitment to a review halfway through the decade.

The LTS Mid-term review: The review presented a crucial opportunity to reflect, adjust, and re-energise as today's political and institutional realities - marked by geopolitical tensions, societal division, and environmental urgency - require the EEB to revisit its strategy, ensuring it remains fit for purpose.

The participatory process was designed to harvest the collective insights and diversity of perspectives across the network. The evidence base was built through inclusive consultations with the eighteen EEB thematic Working Groups, the organisation's strategic governing structures, the wider membership via the annual membership survey, and a structured reflection process across all EEB staff teams.

The "EEB Strategy Forum: CSOs at the Crossroads of a Changing World Order" held in May 2025, brought together EEB members to build on what we learnt from the first five years and how the EEB needs to refocus considering changing context for our mission. The changing world order and geopolitical context, changing EU political realities, external influence, ever clearer evidence of the risks of the triple climate-pollution-nature crises, links to social crises and values, and the needs for industry and agricultural transformation in a competitive changing world were each issues considered. Based on the outcomes, the updated draft entered a second consultation phase, completing the cycle towards the adoption of the revised EEB Long-Term Strategy by the EEB General Assembly on 13 May 2026.

The updated EEB LTS 2026 – 2030: The EEB decided to update the Strategy, introducing 4 main parts.

- **Part A: Setting the scene** for our work, followed by a description of the special role the EEB plays.
- **Part B: The three new overarching topics** that significantly influence our work and impacts: 1. Shrinking civil society space, 2. Deregulation and 3. Disinformation.
- **Part C: Thematic policy priorities** - the strategic objectives and proposed actions for the priority areas have been slightly restructured, to better reflect EEB's daily work. We maintained each priority, dedicated sections set out concrete actions, expected results, and clear indicators. Together, they form a living strategic framework that will guide the work of our Working Groups and staff and shape our annual work programmes through to 2030.
- **Part D: Operational priorities in the new context**: on communication, membership, partnership, governance, event, staff and organisations – as well as fundraising and development approaches.

Theory of Change (ToC) Diagrams: We use ToCs (based on CMP Open Standards) to support adaptive management. They map causal links and the impacts we are aiming to achieve from our activities in each area of work. They are read from left to right as a sequence of cause and effect, contributing our overall objectives for the environment and people (green & brown ovals), also noting which threats will be addressed (purple boxes). Actions (represented by yellow hexagons), aim for intermediate results (blue boxes), i.e. changes in the world around us, required to reach the desired impact, often with several causal steps – e.g. from rolling out social media and other communications tools to raise awareness of the public and mobilise the "silent majority" (the 90% which surveys show care about the environment and climate) to make their voices heard, which in turn increases awareness of national and EU policy makers of peoples' concerns and helps push back against the risks of deregulation and push forward on positive policies and strategies and funding to address the concerns and realise the opportunities from the transition.

This strategy is the result of a collective effort and significant work. We will use it to guide decisions across the network and continue to review and refine it through a participatory approach over time.

The strategy runs to 2030 and is intended as a flexible guide, allowing the EEB to respond to emerging challenges. It is complemented by annual work programmes that provide detailed, adaptive actions.

How will EEB continue to make a difference?

We noted above some examples of how EEB made a difference in the changing environment. The way forward will clearly be difficult, and EEB is committed to fulfilling its mission and making a difference. So how are we going to do it, what is our Theory of Change? And who are we and what are our tools and partnerships that give us confidence that we can make a difference, together?

The European Environmental Bureau brings together citizens' groups from across Europe. Our Network embraces over 190 civil society organisations and together more than 30 million individual supporters. Together with our members, we work on all kinds of issues – from air pollution to the Aarhus convention, biowaste to biodiversity, circular economy to climate change, ecology to economy, heat pumps to health, incineration to insulation, PFAS and pollution to protection of people's rights, waste, water and wellbeing. We speak up for people and nature to help shape policies for a sustainable future. We are the only European network that works on such a wide range of environmental topics and is open to any genuine environmental citizens' group, whether national or European, to join. We hope that the LTS encourages organisations to get in touch & work with us.

Our **overarching Theory of Change** is presented below – showing how our activities improve awareness and motivation, input civil society's voice into policies, support implementation and address multiple risks, while seizing opportunities to reach our overall objectives. In our 2020-2030 LTS, we focused on the health and wellbeing for current and future generation and a healthy environment. This remains the core, but together with these, we are working on health and social justice, a resilience civil society and a one planet economy.

As regards activities, we raise **awareness** of the major environmental challenges and promote the **opportunities and benefits** of addressing them. While our primary focus is on the EU, we also seek to improve regional and global policies. We have a long history of working closely with a variety of organisations and **developing partnerships** across sectors. Because young people have the biggest stake in our shared future, we will work hard to support youth-led initiatives.

The **breadth of topics** we work on enables us to address nexuses, interfaces and potential trade-offs between different environmental policy areas to ensure coherence, e.g. between climate and circular economy, between circular economy and chemicals or between biodiversity and climate. Our **working groups** provide a space for our members to learn from colleagues and **design policies** and campaigns for a greener, social Europe, for progressive industry and global responsibility. Together, we present these policies and target these campaigns at the people who have the power to change laws.

At the global and European levels, we take a lead in **putting things on the agenda** and **advocating policy change** by making our case to decision makers in Brussels and beyond. Our dedicated teams report back from European and international processes, **informing and building the capacity of our members** so they can help to shape **national debates**. Actively aware of priority issues, our members are equipped to engage with national politicians and play a role in civil society movements that push critical issues onto political agendas at national and EU level, raise awareness and support public awareness and agency.



Once policies and laws are adopted, we make sure they are put into practice, **ensuring implementation** by **monitoring and assessing** how national and local authorities perform. The sound implementation of global and EU laws and policies at all levels reduces threats to, and creates opportunities for, people and nature in Europe and beyond. Stronger and better laws and policies will help us to build **a better future where people and nature thrive together.**

COMMITMENT TO DECOLONIALITY

The environmental, social and economic challenges of today are deeply entangled with global power imbalances, historical extraction and exploitation patterns and unequal exposure to harm – many of which are rooted in colonialism. Economic and financial flows of today are still very unequal, with wealthy countries, including in the EU, **appropriating around $2.2 trillion per year in resources and labour embodied in trade** from the Global South through raw materials, agricultural goods and manufactured products produced in the Global South at systematically lower prices due to wage suppression and unequal exchange. A transition to a future in which people and nature thrive together cannot be completed without overcoming historic injustices, ending patterns of exploitation and creating economies and trade that benefit communities around the globe in an equitable manner.

European policies and practices come with negative externalities, including in the field of environmental and climate, for instance, through supply chains, raw material extraction, pesticide exports or waste colonialism that disproportionately affect communities in the Global South or Europe's neighbourhood.

As part of this LTS, the EEB and its network reflected on what decoloniality means for us as environmental citizens organisations. We must avoid reproducing global power imbalances and dynamics by ensuring that advocacy does not impose top-down solutions or reinforce colonial legacies.

Instead, we must amplify local knowledge, promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and use our role to bring forth the perspective of partners and allies in countries around the world affecting by European policies and practices and build partnerships based on mutual respect.

Concrete actions:

- Integrate decolonial analysis into all policy work, especially on trade, raw materials, chemicals and waste, ensuring external impacts are systematically assessed.
- Build equitable exchange and partnerships with civil society in the EU neighbourhood and Global South, prioritising co-creation over top-down support.
- Amplify Indigenous Peoples' and frontline community voices in EEB advocacy, campaigns and communications.
- Address harmful supply chain and value chain practices, advocate for fair global taxation and stronger due diligence rules.
- Provide training for staff and members on decolonial perspectives and how to apply them in environmental policy work.



NO TRANSITION WITHOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

For the EEB, environmental progress is inseparable from social justice. Environmental harms from pollution to climate impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable and marginalised groups, while environmental policies that do not integrate social justice may be disconnected from people's lived realities. Social justice is therefore not an add-on but a precondition for the transition. We need to acknowledge winners and losers, address precarity and inequalities across our societies at root causes and ensure that environmental policies improve people's daily lives rather than deepen inequalities.

Concrete actions

- Embed social justice and just transition principles across all advocacy, ensuring policies address affordability, health and wellbeing.
- Strengthen alliances with trade unions, social organisations, youth groups and grassroots movements to broaden our understanding and reach.
- Develop communication strategies that connect environmental issues to real-life concerns such as PFAS contamination, energy poverty or affordable housing.
- Build our capacity for inclusive engagement, intersectionality and working with marginalised communities.



FROM GENDER BLIND TO GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Gender equality is key to effective environmental action. Pollution, chemicals exposure, climate impacts and resource extraction often have gendered effects, disproportionately harming women and girls. At the same time, women and non-binary people are regularly underrepresented in environmental decision-making. Gendered patterns of disinformation and civic space attacks have sought to undermine their voices. And yet, environmental and climate policy is often gender blind. Gender transformative policies look at the root causes of gender equality. Ecofeminism argues that the climate crisis and oppression of marginalised groups are intertwined, and that neither issue can be solved independently. Gender transformative and ecofeminist policies are about fairness - and improve policy outcomes, strengthen alliances and ensure that environmental solutions reflect the needs and experiences of all.

Concrete actions

- Apply gender-responsive and gender-transformative analysis to environmental policies, including chemicals, agriculture, pollution and climate impacts.
- Build partnerships with gender-equality organisations and integrate gender perspectives into cross-sector alliances.
- Strengthen internal gender and diversity policies, including training for staff and members on gender-sensitive communication and advocacy.
- Promote women's leadership within the network through mentoring, visibility initiatives.


CONFRONTING THE NEW
REALITIES

The new political context in the EU, within the dramatically more dangerous and fluid geopolitical context, have led to EEB to revisit its focus and recognise the priority need to engage in: to (a) avoid deregulation; (b) tackle disinformation; and (c) protect civil society space. Working on these overarching themes is essential to enable progress and avoid the rollback of environmental and social protections across each of the policy fields. Committing to the three new areas are essential to safeguarding a progressive agenda in a difficult context: avoiding deregulation, tackling disinformation, and securing civil society space for a resilient EU. Below we detail what we want to do, why, how we will do it, and how it fits into a theory of change.

1 DEFENDING RULES THAT PROTECT

Defending an evidence based and sound EU law making process, adoption and implementation fit for the triple crisis challenges

Context: The EU is entering a pivotal moment - one in which the future of environmental protection, nature conservation and democratic governance is being tested as rarely before. What began as a set of supposedly "technical simplification" proposals - the Omnibus packages - has rapidly evolved into a sweeping deregulation push with profound consequences for nature, public health and the Union's democratic model.

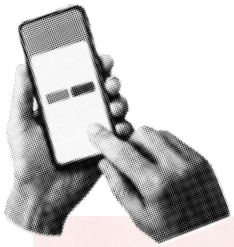
In just one year, under the banner of "competitiveness", the Commission has introduced ten Omnibus packages, with more on the way. Alongside them come "stress tests" and potential revisions of cornerstone environmental laws such as the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive. Far from improving clarity, these initiatives weaken regulatory certainty, erode Europe's global leadership in the green transition, threaten people's health and environment, and undermine the very rules that made the EU a competitive and stable economic space.

The evidence is unequivocal. OECD research shows that ambitious environmental policies do not harm productivity, jobs or growth. What truly hampers Europe's competitiveness is the slow pace of the green transition, largely due to poor implementation. According to the Commission's own data, the EU loses €180 billion every year because existing environmental laws are not properly implemented - losses driven by higher healthcare costs, pollution related economic damage and degraded natural resources.

Yet despite this evidence, the Commission is accelerating deregulation under pressure from certain Member States, specific industry sectors and political groups, while violating basic principles of inclusivity, transparency, accountability and accessibility in EU consultations and non-regression principle. The European Ombudsman has already identified two cases of maladministration linked to Omnibus I and III.

Our Strategy: This deregulation agenda is fed by disinformation, fosters a non-evidence-based approach to decision making and is contributing to the sidelining of CSOs and the shrinking civic space due to the speed, opacity and non-compliant procedures with better regulations and it can only be addressed together with our work against disinformation and against the attacks on NGOs.





2 BUILDING RESILIENCE TO DISINFORMATION

Defending truth and protecting democratic space.

Context: Clearing linked to the deregulation agenda, disinformation and polarising narratives have become structural features of the political and media environment in which environmental policy is debated and decided. Misleading narratives increasingly target environmental action, public institutions and civil society, shaping public debate and narrowing political space for environmental and social progress. Addressing disinformation is therefore an organisational priority that must be integrated across advocacy, policy, communications and network work.

Environmental policies are increasingly debated not only based on evidence, but also through narratives about competitiveness, simplification, security, jobs, identity, fairness, costs and trust in institutions. In this environment, misleading narratives, bad actors and vested interest can reshape public opinion, reduce political ambition and weaken support for environmental action, regardless of the underlying evidence.

Disinformation also increasingly targets NGOs and civil society, questioning legitimacy, funding and motives to reduce influence and shrink civic space. This creates a political environment in which progressive policy becomes harder to achieve even when solutions are available and supported by science.

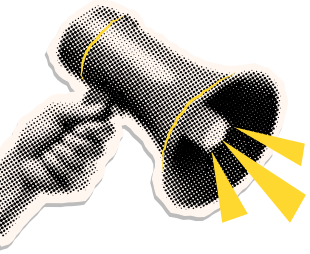
Narratives drive culture. Culture drives power. Power drives policy. In an environment shaped by disinformation and polarisation, defending truth, legitimacy and evidence-based policymaking become a core condition for achieving environmental progress.

Our Strategy: To safeguard the impact of our advocacy, we will strengthen organisational resilience to disinformation and increase our ability to anticipate, understand and respond to misleading narratives affecting environmental policy and civil society.

Our approach focuses on strengthening narrative intelligence, building alliances of trust, supporting our network and partners, and ensuring that credible, evidence-based and value-driven narratives reach audiences effectively.

Central to this approach is the development of **smart communications** across the organisation and network – combining policy expertise, storytelling, audience insight, partnerships and digital tools to ensure that truthful, constructive and future-oriented narratives travel further and have greater societal and political impact.

By strengthening narrative awareness, coordination, and communications capacity across the organisation and network, we aim to protect democratic space, public trust and the political feasibility of environmental, social, and economic progress towards 2030.



3 STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE FOR A VIBRANT DEMOCRACY

Protecting civic space to protect democracy

Context: Civic space in Europe is shrinking – and with it, the foundations of democratic environmental action

Across Europe, civic space is under mounting pressure. What was once considered a stable democratic baseline - the freedom to organise, protest, participate in democratic decision-making, and hold power to account - is increasingly constrained by legal, political and financial pressures.

The EEB, together with partners such as the Green 10 and the Vote Nature Alliance and Civil Society Europe has documented a clear trend: **environmental citizens organisations, grassroots initiatives and environmental defenders face growing obstacles that limit their ability to contribute to policy, mobilise communities and safeguard the public interest against foreign influence and vested interests.**

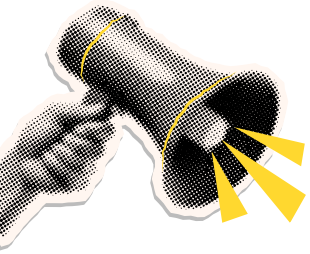
Governments across the EU have introduced or proposed measures that restrict the right to protest, that criminalise civil disobedience or impose disproportionate penalties on activists.

Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are used to intimidate CSOs, journalists and community groups. Funding rules are tightened, access to information is weakened and consultation processes are shortened or bypassed altogether. In several Member States, authorities publicly delegitimise NGOs, portraying them as “foreign agents”, “anti-development”, or “obstacles to progress”, echoing tactics seen in shrinking democracies worldwide.

These pressures are not isolated incidents - they form a systemic pattern. Environmental organisations are particularly targeted because they challenge powerful financial interests and expose governance failures. As the EEB has repeatedly highlighted, a shrinking civic space directly undermines the EU’s ability to deliver on climate, nature and pollution goals, because ambitious environmental policy depends on active public participation, scrutiny and accountability.

At the same time, the rise of authoritarian narratives, polarisation and disinformation fuels hostility towards civil society. Public debate becomes narrower, more hostile and less evidence based. When civic space shrinks, policy ambition shrinks with it. The result is a dangerous feedback loop: weakened participation leads to weaker policies, which further erode trust in institutions, making it even harder for civil society to operate.

Civic space is the oxygen of democracy. Without it, environmental progress suffocates.



Our Strategy: Defending and expanding civic space as a precondition for environmental progress

To safeguard our mission and the democratic foundations of environmental protection, the EEB will integrate civic space defence across our policy, advocacy and movement building work. We will work to expose threats, strengthen resilience and build a Europe where civil society can operate freely, safely and effectively.

Our focus is twofold:

Protection and resilience
Strengthen our capacity to monitor, document and respond to civic space restrictions affecting CSOs, grassroots initiatives and environmental defenders. This includes legal threats, protest restrictions, SLAPPs, funding pressures and defunding, smear campaigns and disinformation as well as attacks on participation rights. This capacity needs to be further built within our network of members as well as with coalitions such the Green10 and the Vote Nature Alliance and key network such as Civil Society Europe.

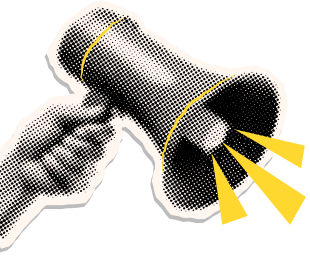
Power and participation
Scale our efforts to protect and expand meaningful public participation in environmental decision-making and policymaking, defending the importance of environmental advocacy, ensuring that communities, CSOs and citizens can shape the policies that affect their lives and the planet. This is ever more important in a political context dominated by deregulation efforts and fast-tracking of decision-making that circumvents meaningful public participation.

Specific activities we will undertake to achieve our goals include:

Civic space intelligence
Systematically track and analyse trends in shrinking civic space across Europe in close collaboration with our members and partners, in particular Civil Society Europe, with a focus on the situation of environmental citizens organisations, and share our concerns, positions and demands with EU institutions, national governments and partners.

Strategic alliances for civic freedom
Deepen collaboration with civic space organisations such as Civil Society Europe and its members as well as national level organisations defending civic space and connect them to our membership network. Coordinate joint advocacy, share intelligence, and build a united front defending democratic rights across Europe, across the environmental movement and beyond.

Narrative and legitimacy building
Counter narratives that delegitimise civil society by debunking disinformation about environmental organisations and telling compelling stories about the essential role that CSOs and communities play in defending the public interest. Build alliances with journalists, academics, funders, political actors and trusted messengers to amplify these narratives.



Legal and policy defence
Advocate for strong international, EU and national level safeguards, including the implementation of the European Civil Society Strategy, a robust framework for transparent and inclusive consultation processes, effective anti SLAPP legislation and its implementation, protection of the right to protest and enforcement of information, participation and access to justice rights.

Movement resilience and capacity building
Equip our network with tools to navigate and resist shrinking civic space by providing capacity-building and resources on rights and risks, opening peer learning spaces for CSOs facing similar pressures and offering support to member experiencing political, legal or financial pressures.





PRIORITY AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS & GOVERNANCE

Resisting the deregulation attempts while securing the building blocks of a better future.

Context: The 2024 European elections marked a pivotal shift, reshaping EU decision-making dynamics. The centre-right EPP can now swing majorities either toward pro-EU centrists or toward a right-leaning bloc that includes hard-right forces, effectively dissolving the former cordon sanitaire and unsettling long-standing institutional balances. Once the most conservative of the three institutions, the Council has in several recent Omnibus negotiations pushed back against further weakening of environmental and health standards proposed by the European Parliament. Meanwhile, the European Commission is advancing with its deregulation agenda - initially presented as "technical simplification" - under pressure from certain governments, political groups and vested interests, increasingly framing defence and competitiveness in opposition to environmental protection.

And despite the EU's enormous investment needs for climate action and adaptation - estimated at €520 billion annually until 2030 and €70 billion per year until 2050 the Commission's proposals for the next MFF reduce funding for climate and nature, putting citizens' wellbeing and Europe's long-term competitiveness at risk.



All of this is unfolding at a time when disinformation, polarisation and far-right attacks on civil society are shrinking civic space, undermining evidence-based policymaking and targeting NGOs through delegitimisation, restrictive measures and funding cuts. Meanwhile, the state of our environment continues to deteriorate - pollution is rising, ecosystems are degrading, and the economic and health costs of inaction are mounting.

It is therefore essential that, while we adapt to this new political landscape, prioritise resisting deregulation (to safeguard the acquis and protect decades of environmental law-building) and countering these attacks, we also secure the foundations for a renewed environmental ambition. So that by 2030 Europe can enter a new era of forward-looking policy leadership capable of driving transformative progress on nature, climate and pollution, grounded in a political system where civil society is valued, protected and empowered.

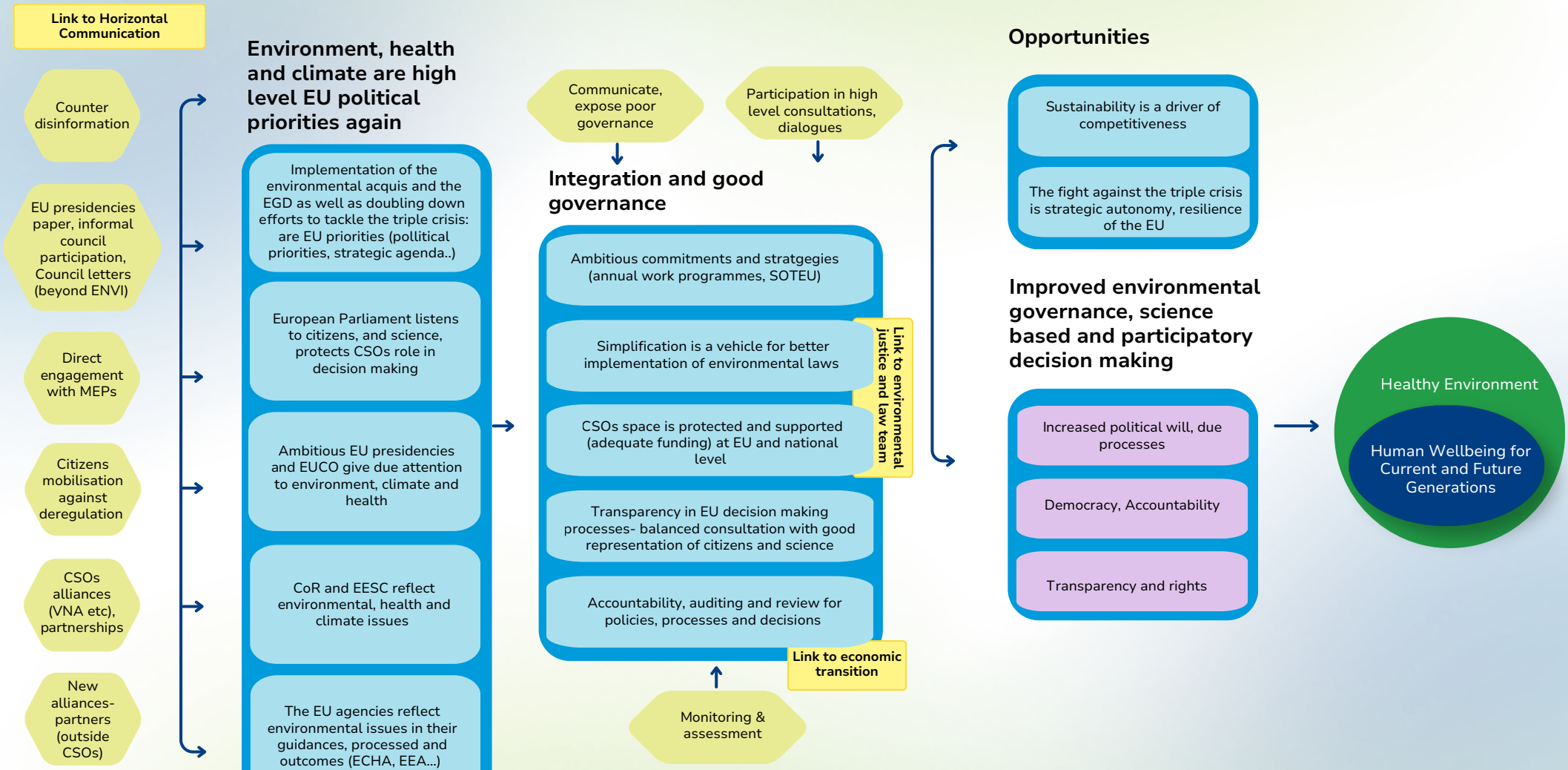
Our Strategy: Our strategy focuses in the one hand on effectively mitigating deregulation and the attacks strategically through strengthening internal coordination, capacity, intelligence sharing with our members, capacity at national level and through an optimal use of existing channels and means like the Presidency papers while on the other hand securing the foundations for renewal/revival of environmental ambition through the strategic vote nature alliance.

Specific **activities** we will undertake to achieve our goals include:

1. **Next MFF (2028–2034):** Advocacy work on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for a budget that is line with science and protects civil society– internal coordination within the EEB secretariat, capacity building for members (through the council) and coalition work with VNA (with a strong focus on LIFE programme).
2. **Engagement with the Member States and New Council formations**: We will use our well-established Presidency papers and Council letters to highlight the costs of inaction and push back against deregulation, we will also target different council formations outside of ENVI (COMP, GAC) and the European Council (EUCO).
3. **Engagement with the European Parliament:** We will strategically coordinate our efforts as regards our thematic engagement towards the European Parliament on deregulation- notably through a deregulation task force.
4. **Engagement with VNA:** Together with the VNA we will Build an EU wide grassroots upswell of pro-environment democratic mobilisation, capable of contrasting the current dominant narratives, and able to reverse the European political dynamic towards our goal; inform and engage citizens better ahead of the 2029 European elections and set the ground for forward looking next Commission President's Political guidelines and strategic Agenda strongly committing to addressing the climate–nature–pollution crisis and advancing intergenerational equity and responsibility.
5. **Capacity building for members:** We will keep our members informed on horizontal developments to help with their engagement at national level (in a very fast-paced environment which need fast mobilisation and engagement) through the weekly update on deregulation, attacks on CSOs, MFF and will keep providing tailored materials for national engagement and monthly calls with VNA.



THEORY OF CHANGE: EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS & GOVERNANCE



ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND JUSTICE

Ensuring that laws protect health and the environment for current and future generations.

Context: The law is a crucial tool to protect the rights of people and nature. Progressive industry understands the benefits of effective legislation, but too often vested interests lobby hard to block, influence, undermine and even destroy environmental legislation. Current laws are sometimes inadequate and often poorly implemented.

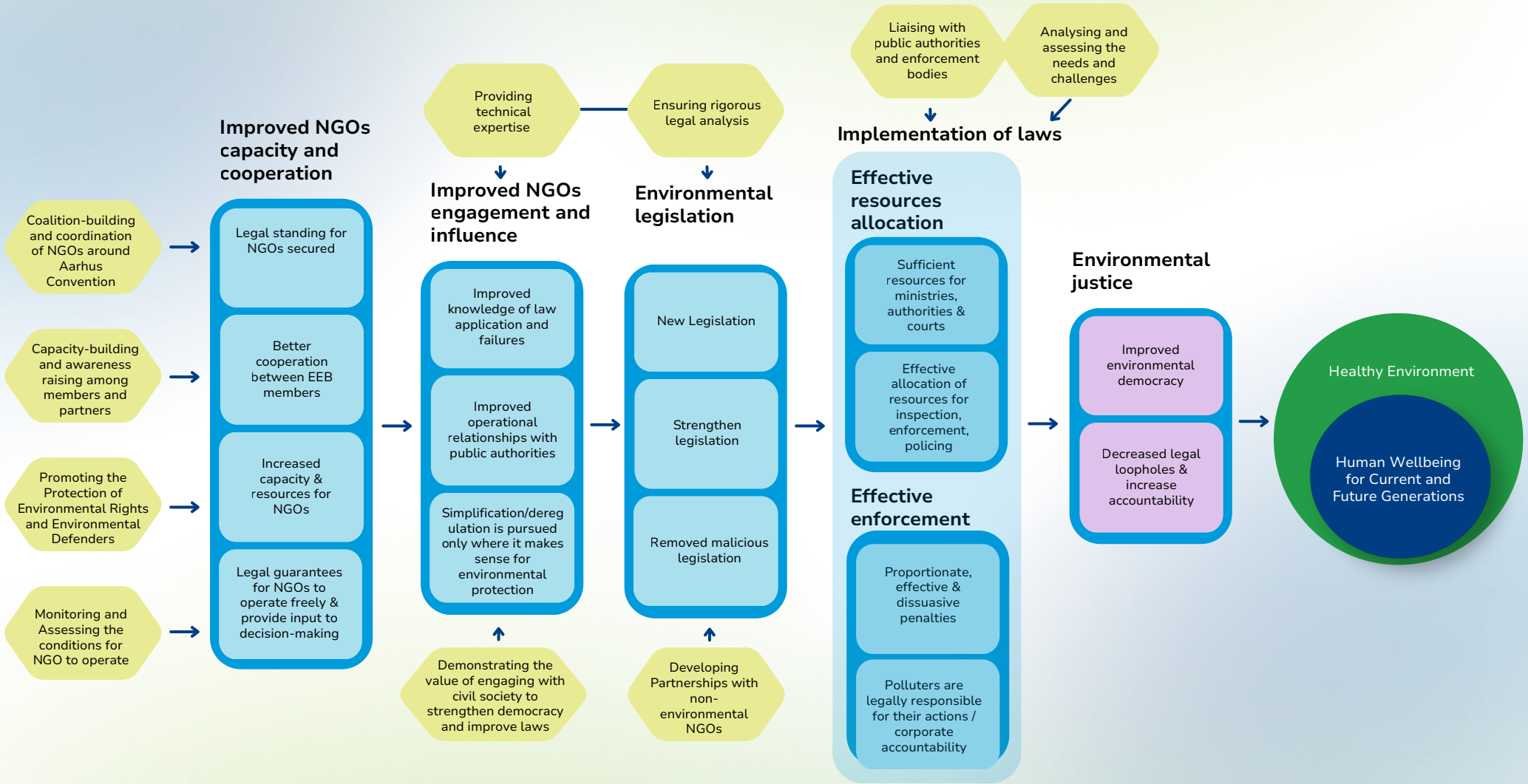
Environmental democracy rights are intrinsically linked to the health of democracy itself, and if democratic indicators decline, so do the protection of the rights to access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making, and access to courts. Environmental defenders across Europe are at risk in a hostile environment and deserve protection and support in exercising their environmental rights. We need to promote the benefits of environmental rights as part of a healthy democracy, highlight the essential role of environmental defenders and NGOs in society, and protect current laws which guarantee environmental democracy rights.



Our Strategy: We need legislation that protects citizens' rights, health and the environment, and to improve and defend existing legislation from attack. Halfway through the strategy period, we are building on the strengthened environmental democracy and access to justice rights in numerous pieces of EU legislation and the EEB is now established position as a key player in environmental governance. To build on this, we must expand legal networks, deepen engagement and push for strong legal protections across the EU. As incremental detailed policy improvements are more difficult to achieve for environmental democracy rights in the second half of the strategy period, the focus will be on support for democratic values more broadly.

1. **Representing the interests of the environment:** by formally contributing to and following public processes that impact the environment, providing expertise and information, giving a voice to nature and monitoring the state of the environment and compliance;
2. **Support the protection of environmental defenders** in the face of a hostile environment towards environmental and climate activists;
3. **Securing public participation by ensuring environmental rights**: to have relevant information, to be part of decision-making that affects the environment and to be able to challenge decisions where they are against the law;
4. **Fighting for strong and meaningful public participation in EU institutions and processes**: by securing meaningful consultation and participation frameworks and resisting that participation is pushed aside in a deregulatory drive;
5. **Increasing enforcement and accountability** by pushing for stronger liability regimes, traceability, sanctioning, and making sure that the precautionary principle is applied and that polluters pay.

THEORY OF CHANGE: ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND JUSTICE



GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

EAdvocating for progressive environmental policies at global and regional levels

Context: Environmental challenges are global problems, and global problems demand collective solutions. Pollution does not stop at borders, and climate breakdown and the biodiversity crisis threaten every society, regardless of geography or wealth. For decades, governments have negotiated hundreds of multilateral environmental agreements. Some have delivered real progress, yet overall pressures on nature continue to intensify. Key issues still lack binding global rules, and even where commitments exist, governments struggle to implement them effectively. Strong civil society participation in international and regional processes remains essential to ensure accountability, transparency, and ambition.

In recent years, however, environmental multilateralism has come under strain. Major powers stepping back from UN agencies and multilateral environmental agreements have weakened global cooperation and created funding gaps that undermine the ability of these institutions to function. This retreat has slowed progress at a moment when the world's most climate-vulnerable countries are demanding faster, fairer action. Their frustration is justified: while they face escalating climate impacts and environmental devastation, many wealthy nations continue on extractive, high resource use pathways. Recalibrating international cooperation and partnerships requires acknowledging historical responsibilities and ensuring that global governance structures genuinely reflect equity and justice.



Geopolitical tensions and armed conflicts further complicate this landscape. As crises multiply, the political space for international cooperation narrows, making it harder for governments to invest in shared environmental, climate, and poverty-reduction goals. Resources are diverted toward security priorities, diplomatic channels become strained, and trust between states and people erodes. For environmental organisations, this means working in a world where conflict increasingly shapes the conditions for collective action. An expanding number of conflicts undermines sustainability, resilience, and justice, reinforcing the urgency of safeguarding peaceful cooperation as a foundation for long-term environmental progress.

Yet these challenges also open space for new leadership. As some actors withdraw, others are stepping forward – countries across Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific are increasingly vocal champions of long-term sustainability, rights-based approaches, and stronger global rules. The EU has a unique opportunity to work with these partners, reinforce multilateral institutions and help fill the political and financial void left by disengaged powers. By strengthening its own environmental laws, aligning fully with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and leading by example in global fora, from the UN to the OECD and beyond, the EU can help rebuild trust and momentum in international environmental governance.

EU enlargement and neighbourhood partnerships also remain powerful levers for change. Accession and association processes allow civil society to push for rapid improvements in environmental standards in the EU's immediate neighbourhood, ensuring that the Union's leadership is grounded in concrete action at home and with its closest partners. The EEB sees vast potential is supporting environmental organisations in candidate countries and enabling peer learning and knowledge sharing between candidate countries and with organisations that worked on leading their countries into the EU most recently.

Our Strategy: We will advocate for progressive environmental policies at the global and regional levels and monitor their implementation at the national and EU levels. This, together with advocating for the ambitious implementation of the SDGs in and by the EU, should lead to stronger environmental laws not only around the world but also within the EU, its Member States, and in EU candidate and partnership countries. At the same time, civil society must play a decisive role in shaping the future of global sustainability governance. As the world begins to debate a post-2030 Agenda, environmental organisations need to be a strong, coordinated voice demanding ambitious goals, robust accountability mechanisms, and a renewed model of environmental multilateralism capable of addressing planetary crises and historical responsibilities.

Stronger environmental organisations and citizens well-informed about global and regional processes improve participation, transparency and the legitimacy of international decision-making. Their engagement is essential not only to defend existing multilateral frameworks, many of which are under political and financial pressure, but also to help design the next generation of global agreements.

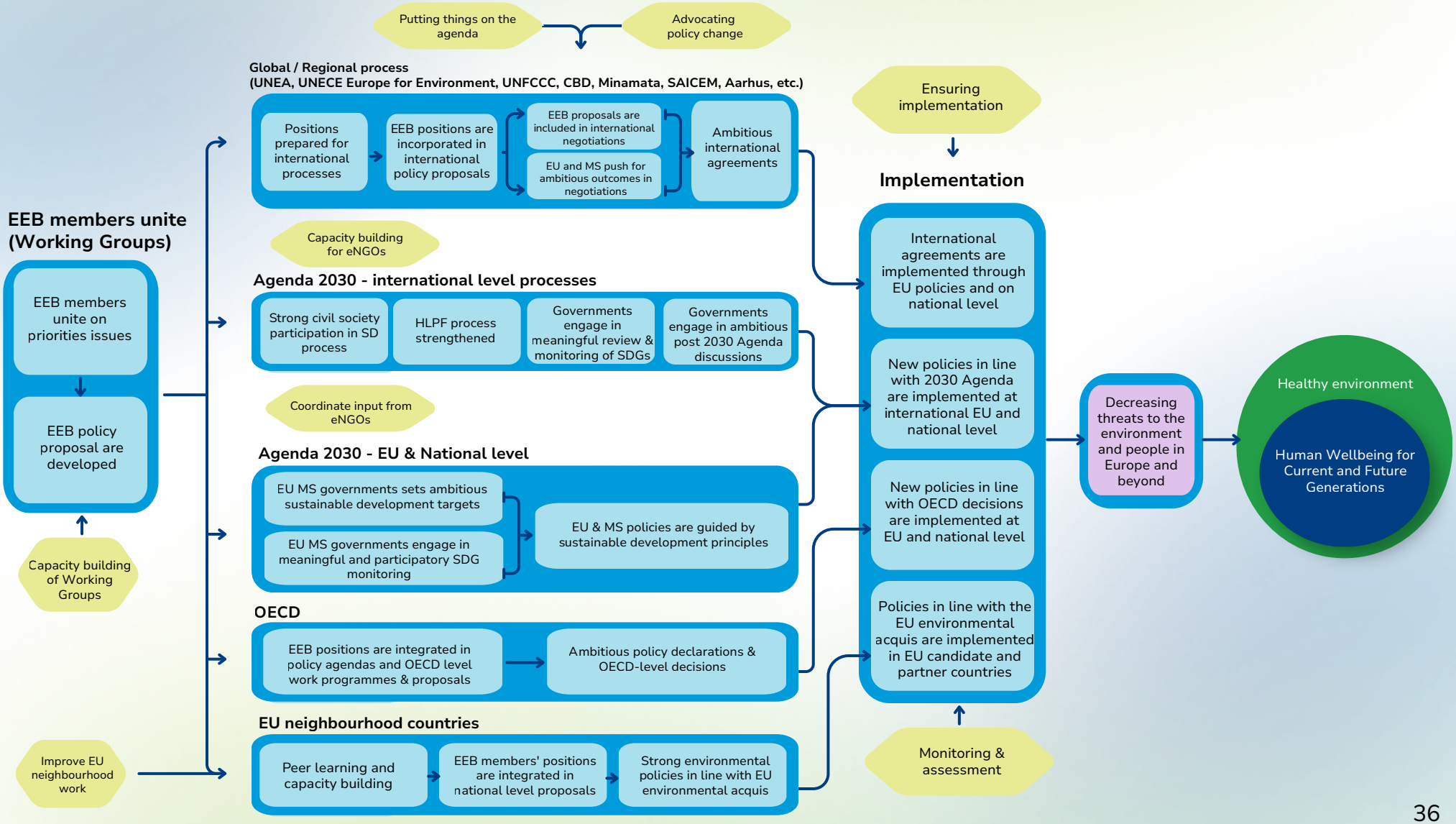
Specific actions we will undertake to achieve our goals include:

- **Ensuring robust and progressive environmental policies at global and regional levels** in selected processes, including the UN Environment Assembly, through active contribution to international and regional processes, including new legally binding agreements where possible. We will encourage the EU and its Member States to act as global leaders in the transformation to sustainability and to push for progressive outcomes, including in the emerging debates on a post-2030 Agenda.



- **Building the capacity of environmental NGOs and broader civil society to take part in global and regional processes**, coordinating their input, and empowering them to advocate for strong environmental multilateralism. This includes supporting civil society efforts to articulate ambitious proposals for the next global sustainability framework post 2030 and to defend the integrity of existing multilateral environmental agreements.
- **Acting as a watchdog and supporting the implementation of international and regional agreements**, legal or political, nudging the EU and governments towards full and ambitious SDG implementation. We will also monitor and respond to threats to environmental multilateralism, including political disengagement and defunding, while promoting solutions that strengthen global cooperation.
- **Empowering environmental NGOs in EU accession and partnership countries**, in particular with and for our members and partners operating under very difficult conditions in Ukraine, pushing for rapid approximation to European environmental standards, and ensuring that these organisations can contribute meaningfully to regional and global debates, including the development of a post-2030 Agenda grounded in equity, justice, and long-term sustainability.
- Build **EEB positions on issues related to a rapidly changing geopolitical reality** with increasing violence, conflict and war, an erosion of a rules-based international order, persisting and even deepening power imbalances and a lack of accountability for those ignoring even the basic principles of international law, on topics such as the interlinkages between environment and conflict or the militarisation of politics, and how conflict and militarisation impact on our ability to achieve long-term sustainability, resilience and justice.

THEORY OF CHANGE: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES



ECONOMIC TRANSITION

Building a socially just and sustainable economy

Context: 20.000 scientists warn that we face mass extinction if we do not dramatically slow down resource use. Material extraction has tripled in five decades, is still skyrocketing, and now accounts for more than 90 percent of global biodiversity loss and water stress impacts, and approximately half of global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, widening inequalities, rising precarity and the erosion of public services show that the current economic model is failing people as much as the planet. Our economy is pushing society and nature into burn-out. This has to stop.

The political context in Europe is increasingly shaped by a backlash against environmental, a deregulatory agenda for key social and environmental safeguards, in a context of rising influence of the far right and authoritarian forces, in collaboration with conservative forces. Under the banners of competitiveness, security and simplification, hard-won protections are being weakened, public investment constrained, and corporate influence over policymaking reinforced. Social frustration caused by rising living costs and insecurity is being instrumentalised to pit economic interests against environmental action, despite their deep interdependence.



At the same time, scientific evidence and lived experience demonstrate that wellbeing, security and democratic participation are possible without economic growth and within planetary boundaries. Achieving a just transition for all within a liveable planet by 2030, therefore, requires confronting entrenched power structures, reducing harmful production and consumption at their source, and reorganising the economy around sufficiency, care and democracy.

Our Strategy: We work towards an economy that delivers wellbeing for all while respecting planetary limits. By 2030, Europe must move beyond growth-dependence and profit extraction, reduce harmful production and consumption, and reclaim economic governance in the public interest. Our strategy is structured around four interlinked pillars:

Employment and public services beyond growth

A socially just economy must guarantee decent livelihoods and social security without relying on perpetual economic growth. Employment should provide purpose, democratic participation and sufficient income, while public services must be strong, accessible and resilient.

We will promote:

- Employment and social security systems that deliver economic democracy and a decent livelihood, including work-time reduction and job guarantee schemes;
- A shift towards prevention-led, universal public services in health, care, housing, education, energy and mobility;
- Public services that are resilient to environmental, economic, political and health crises, publicly owned and accessible to all.

Production of societally harmful industrial activities reduced, capped and banned

Meeting climate, biodiversity and social objectives requires an absolute reduction of environmentally and socially harmful production, not just efficiency gains. We will work towards:

- Resource extraction limited to societal needs within a post-growth, environmental justice and planetary boundaries framework;
- Binding EU-level resource use reduction targets and a post-growth industrial policy focused on sufficiency, repair and durability;
- Business models that move beyond profit extraction towards social and environmental purpose, supported by strong accountability and regulation and a just transition for workers in polluting sectors (fossil fuel, military, etc.).

Consumption of societally harmful human activities reduced, capped and banned

High-income consumption patterns are incompatible with planetary boundaries and social justice. Reducing excessive consumption is essential to meeting climate and biodiversity goals while ensuring everyone's basic needs are met. We will advocate for:

- The adoption of 1.5-degree lifestyles as a policy objective, with fair measures that address overconsumption while protecting low-income households;
- Reorienting trade towards ethical trade and improved trade agreements aligned with social and environmental objectives.

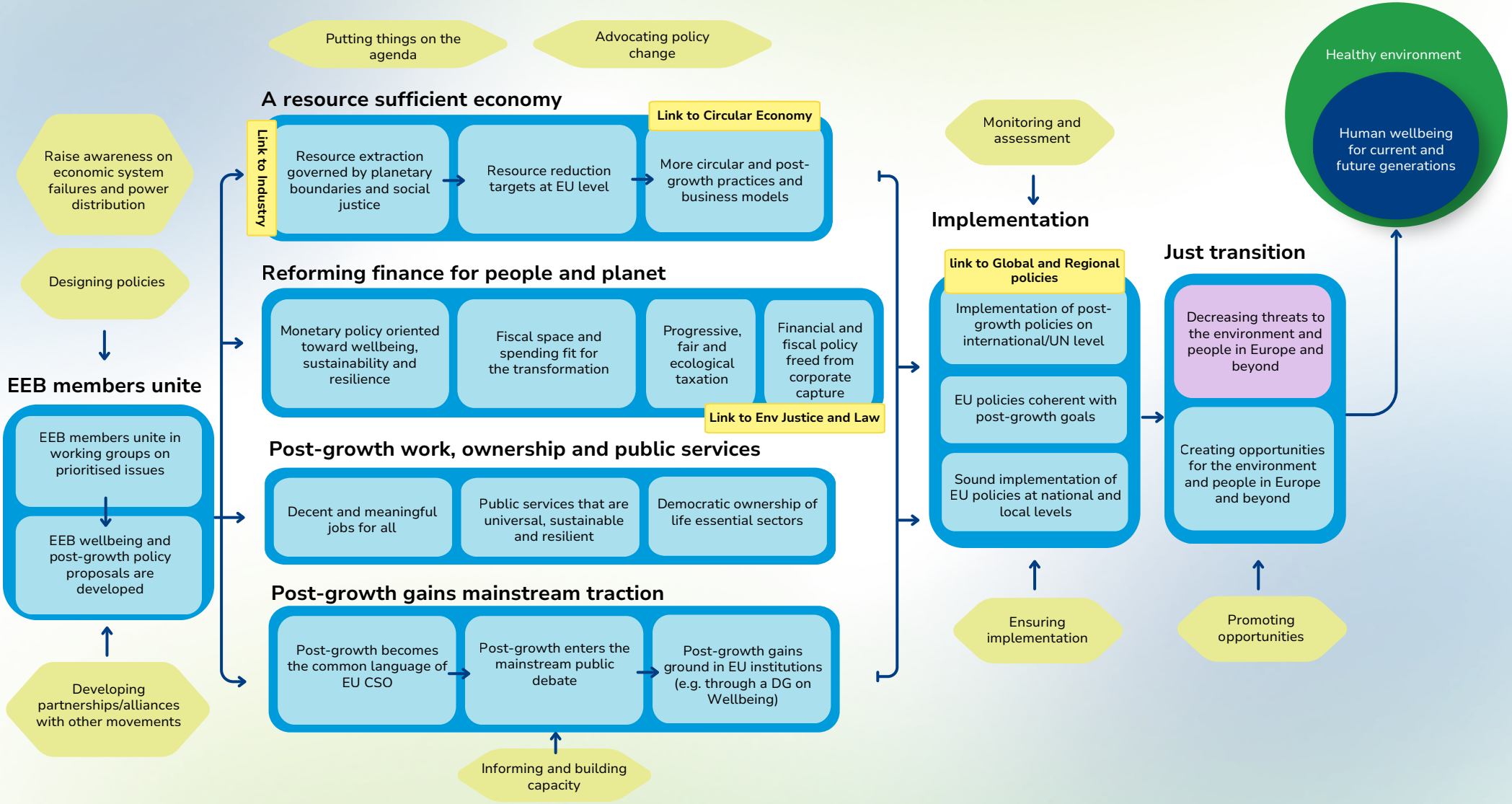
Fiscal and monetary coordination

A just transition requires reclaiming monetary and fiscal policy to serve societal wellbeing rather than narrow market interests. We will push for:

- Monetary policies that prioritise societal wellbeing, sustainability and resilience, including tools such as credit guidance;
- Future-oriented fiscal spending and sufficient fiscal space at EU and national levels to enable the transformation;
- Progressive taxes and charges on pollution, carbon, wealth, aviation and resource use that internalise environmental costs and enable social justice.



THEORY OF CHANGE: ECONOMIC TRANSITION



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Advocating for a transition to sustainable food systems grounded in agroecology

Context: The way we produce and consume food is driving multiple environmental, social, and health crises. Meanwhile, the climate and biodiversity crises are also growing threats to our ability to produce food, as is becoming increasingly apparent in Europe and across the globe. The science is clear: we must urgently make our food systems sustainable, equitable, and resilient by addressing how we produce, distribute, and consume food. From nutrient pollution to biodiversity loss and climate change, from household food insecurity to the growing burden of diet-related diseases, the challenges are complex and interrelated.

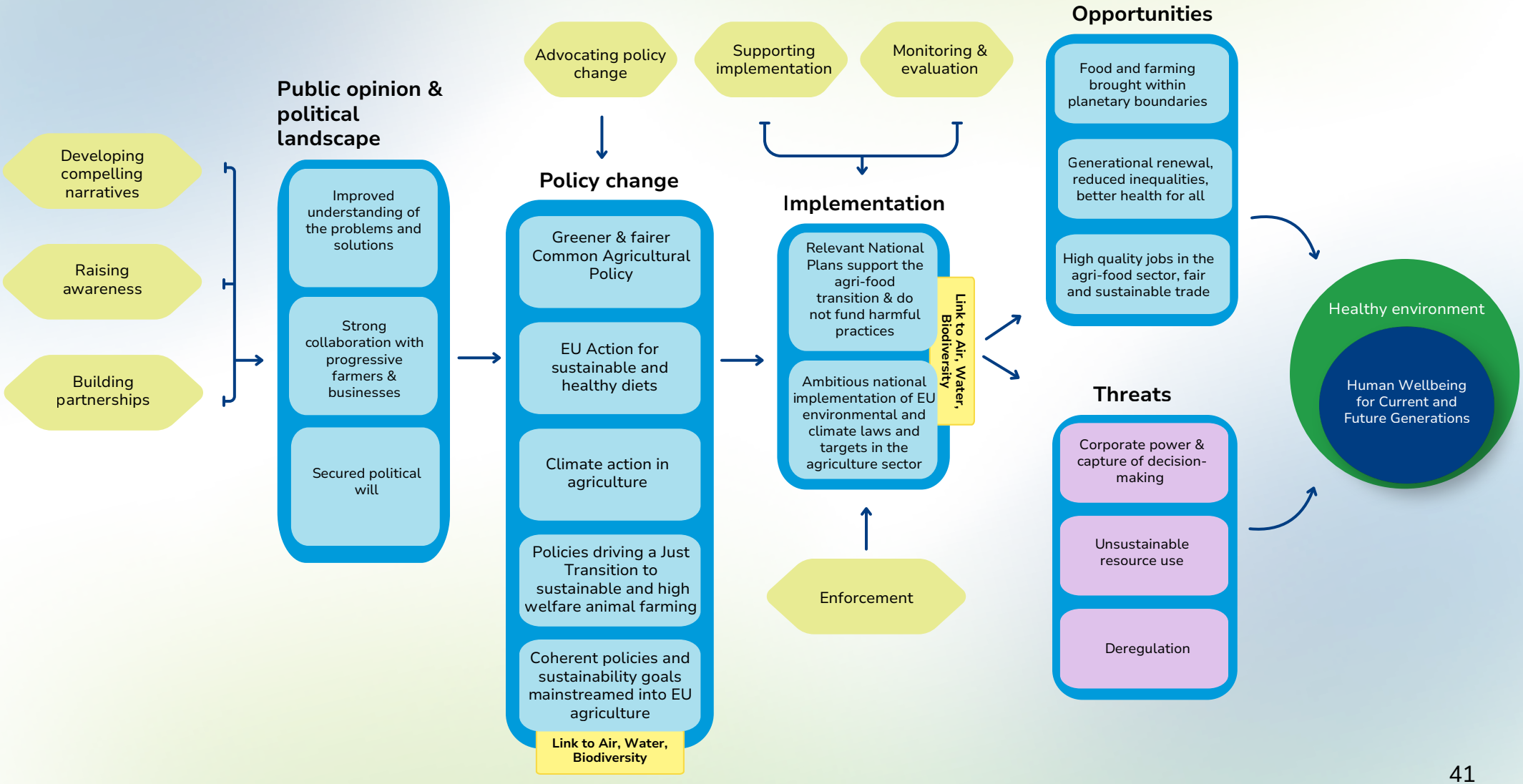
Many of the solutions are known and within reach, and many farmers and communities are already implementing them on the ground. Yet, overall progress is excruciatingly slow, as policymakers continue to rely on voluntary approaches while putting most of the burden of change on those with the least power in food value chains: farmers and consumers. Bold and systemic policy and legislative action is urgently needed to set a clear long-term transition pathway, target public funding to deliver on social and environmental objectives, end harmful subsidies, regulate polluters, and curtail corporate power, to name a few.



Our Strategy: We will push for a transition to circular, healthy, fair, and sustainable food systems, underpinned by a move to agroecology, less and better animal production and consumption, high animal welfare standards and healthier diets, by:

1. **Raising awareness** of the problems surrounding our industrial agri-food system and of the solutions by developing compelling, evidence-based messaging and story-telling and disseminating it across the EEB's channels and through active press engagement.
2. **Building bridges** with progressive farming groups, the health community, and progressive businesses and taking a leading role in civil society coalitions.
3. **Advocating for EU policy and legislative change** to mitigate the industrial agri-food system's harmful impacts and promote a Just Transition to sustainable, fair, and healthy food and farming, including by securing robust environmental and social safeguards relating to agriculture, directing funding towards the transition, and pursuing high ambition on agriculture in other policy areas (e.g. climate or water).
4. S**upporting EEB members** to engage in EU policy and legislative processes, including national implementation, by sharing information and facilitating exchanges.
5. **Scrutinising the implementation of EU policies and laws** related to agriculture and food, such as the Common Agricultural Policy and water, biodiversity, and climate legislation, and raising awareness about shortcomings.
6. **Pushing for better enforcement of EU environmental laws** in the agriculture sector, in close collaboration with EEB members.

THEORY OF CHANGE: AGRICULTURE AND FOOD



BIODIVERSITY, WATER & SOIL

Putting biodiversity on a path to recovery for the benefit of people, climate and the planet.

Context: Mass extinction of species and climate breakdown are the two main environmental challenges of our modern society. Yet both challenges are intertwined, each exacerbating the other. Numerous influential assessments (e.g. EEA's State of the Environment report) confirmed that biodiversity is declining across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems both in the EU and globally. The economic growth has been at the cost of immense biodiversity loss, which now poses a critical and pervasive systemic risk to the economy, financial stability and human wellbeing as repeatedly concluded by the World Economic Forum. In addition, Europe's water resources are under severe pressure, with water stress affecting one third of Europe's population and territory. Maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems, protecting watersheds and ensuring that groundwater resources are replenished is crucial to ensuring Europe's future water resilience.

Our nature (including healthy biodiversity, water and soils) supports the EU's economy and jobs, food production, health, resilience and security. A healthy nature is also a matter of social justice and democracy: pollution and pandemics, extreme weather events, energy and water poverty disproportionately affects already vulnerable groups such as youth, women, the elderly or local communities and Indigenous People, and the poorest at large. It is imperative to achieve an urgent shift in our economy and society towards sustainability, where nature is valued, water is sustainably managed, and soils are brought back to health.



A substantial body of EU legislation seeks to protect and now also restore nature, water and soil as well as to ease the pressures on ecosystems including from changing climate. However, these laws have not been properly implemented and suffer from a lack of funding. In addition, the EU has so far largely failed to achieve policy coherence and reverse nature destruction driven by EU policies on agriculture, energy or transport. Moreover, the polluting industries and their political allies are now doubling down to weaken these nature laws to continue the business as usual of pollution and nature destruction.

Global agreements on nature (for example Kunming Montreal Biodiversity Framework or UN Freshwater Challenge) have established a strong framework that can drive ambition within the EU. By aligning with these shared targets, the EU can strengthen its policies, mobilize funding, and encourage cooperation across its Member States, turning global commitments into environmental improvements on the ground. These agreements also raise expectations and accountability, pushing the EU to lead by example through more ambitious nature protection and large-scale restoration, while fostering innovation in governance and green investment that benefit both ecosystems and society.

These top challenges call for a need to rethink the links between our economy and the natural environment, land, water and natural resources. Only by properly valuing nature and by restoring the natural environment in Europe will it be possible to maintain a competitive economy and a high quality of life for the Europeans.

Our Strategy: We will act in partnership with others to defend the EU's biodiversity, water and soil policies and laws as well as advocate for strengthening their effective implementation and enforcement.

This will be achieved via advocacy, communication and campaign actions aimed at citizens, civil society, policy-makers and progressive allies, resulting in the renewal of the EU's environmental ambition in the EU by 2030 including by:

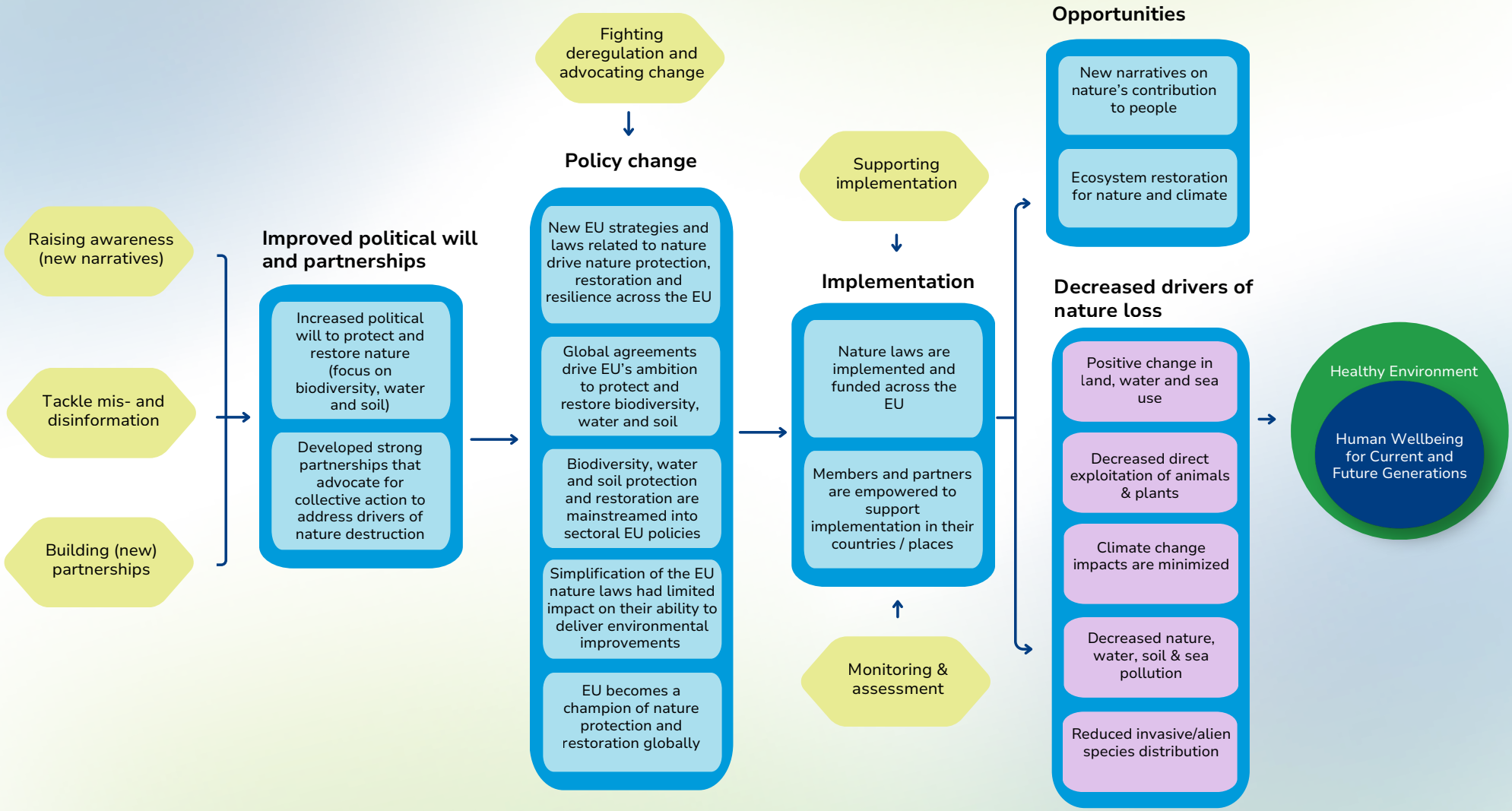
- **Organising national and European resistance to deregulation** with a focus on key nature and water laws and continuing to co-lead the Hands Off Nature campaign, including its public mobilisation actions.
- **Shaping the simplification of the affected nature and water laws** via joint advocacy as part of the joint Hands Off Nature campaign.
- **Supporting the effective implementation and enforcement of nature, water and soil laws** with a particular focus on the new Nature Restoration Law that can be a game changer for solving biodiversity and climate crisis.
- **Maximising opportunities offered by the new EU strategies and legislation** (e.g. on water and climate resilience) and advocating for increase in public and private funding for nature.
- **Developing and implementing the nature-focused actions** as part of the Vote Nature Alliance campaign for the renewal of EU environmental ambition.

We believe that Europe can re-enter a cycle of progressive environmental leadership by 2030 through strengthened civil society capacity, stronger links between citizens and policymakers, reshaped public narratives and increased public pressure on national and EU leaders. This will require powerful communications and a chorus of voices from partners within and beyond the environmental movement that should result in the increased political will of governments and other stakeholders to urgently address the nature and water crises.





THEORY OF CHANGE: BIODIVERSITY, WATER & SOIL



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Moving to a resource-efficient and clean economy that creates jobs, not waste

Context: Year after year Earth Overshoot Day, when "humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year", is announced earlier than in previous years. While the Circular Economy is promoted at the EU level as a mainstream policy to deliver a wealthy and sustainable economy and a lever for decarbonization, its genuine and systematic application is still to be materialised for most economic sectors and markets. The ratio of reused and recycled materials to total material use in the EU stagnates at 12% in 2024, despite record recycling rates, due to increased overall resource use.

We know which policy instruments and best practices will accelerate the transition from a linear to a circular economy - where resources are reused and recycled instead of used and thrown away - we just need to put them into practice.

What counts as 'circular' is often debated, but we are clear it means reducing virgin resource use and cutting the environmental impacts of industry. Public and politicians alike must learn more about what a genuine circular economy that aims at reducing the absolute consumption of resources is and why it is good news for everyone. Circularity, when applied to the full value chain, helps resilience, security and race-to-the-top competitiveness.

It is also important to keep a critical eye on circular economy developments , notably to ensure actions do not neglect natural eco-systems and human health.

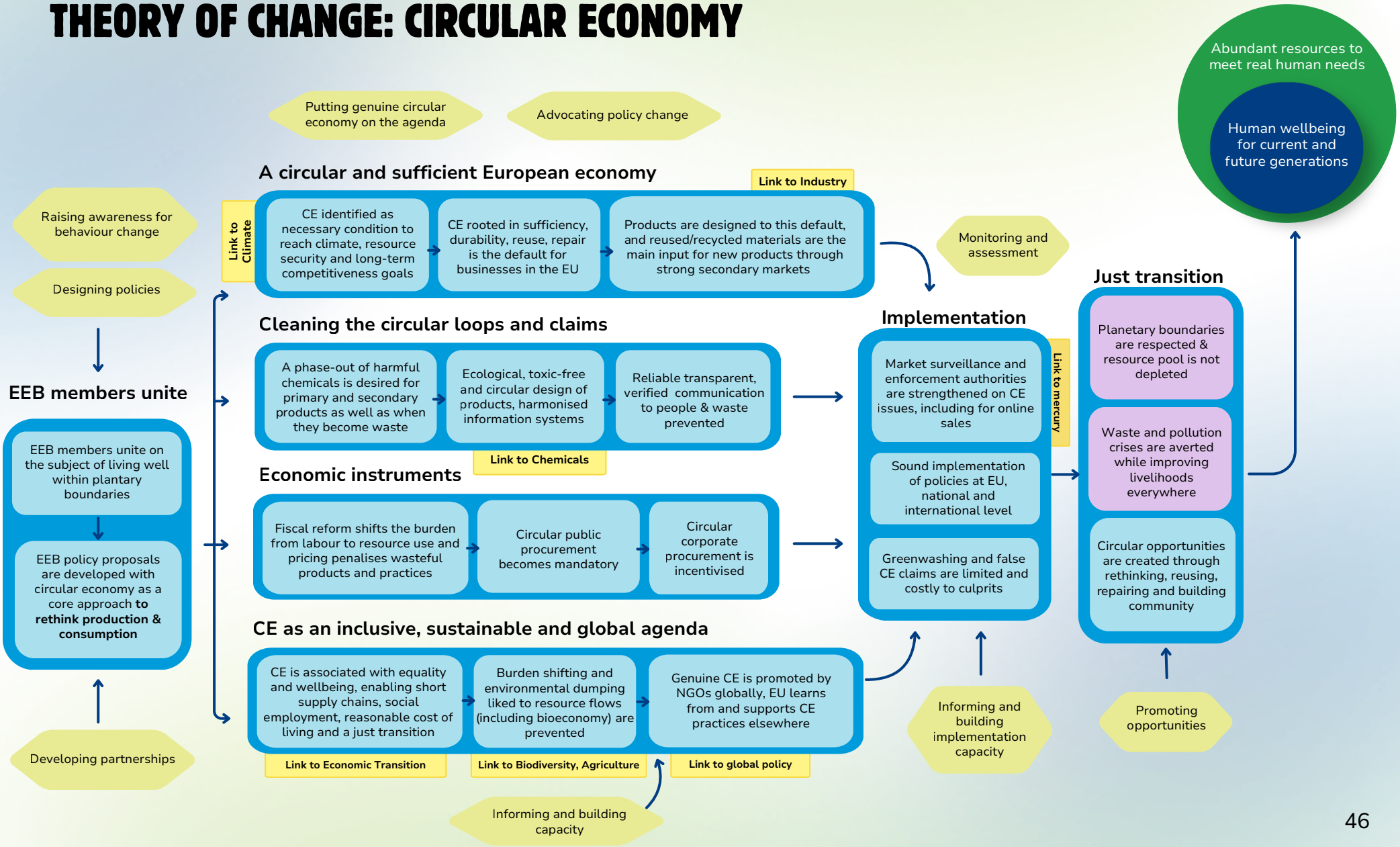


Our Strategy: The overarching objective of the strategy will be to achieve absolute reductions in resource extraction, less waste production and reduce pressure on planetary boundaries.

We will achieve this by:

1. **Developing powerful narratives** – that respond to the new geopolitical context – to stress the urgency of transition towards a genuine circular and sufficient European economy:
2. **Moving circularity from buzzword to reality** by making a genuine circular economy desirable for different stakeholders and expanding alliances including to industry actors, to make the case for its links to competitiveness, resilience and security;
3. **Advocating for a resource governance circular economy approach** at EU level in key economic sectors (including avoidance of burden shifting towards bioeconomy sectors, and curtailing the rise in online sales);
4. **Ensuring that circular economy remains recognised** as a climate, industry, resource, competitiveness and resilience solution;
5. **Linking circular economy as a solution to social crises**, including the cost-of-living crisis and the housing crisis, and linking it to other social and environmental policies, such as sufficiency policies;
6. **Integrating global aspects** into the workstreams of the circular economy team and examining the global repercussions of EU-centric policymaking;
7. **Working to close the loop on products**, so that toxic free materials can flow iteratively through the economy;
8. **Encouraging the development of market-based instruments**, including fiscal reform and procurement, to ensure circular products are promoted, and the externalities of linear products are accounted for;
9. **Pushing for better monitoring indicators** and increased support for market surveillance and trade transparency;
10. **Exposing 'greenwashing'** to limit the misuse of the "sustainability" and circular economy concepts.

THEORY OF CHANGE: CIRCULAR ECONOMY



CLIMATE AND ENERGY

Ensuring a rapid and just transition to a climate neutral economy that protects people and nature from climate breakdown.

Context: Successive IPCC reports have underlined the risk of catastrophic climate breakdown resulting from a continuation of the current business-as-usual. The solution is to dramatically accelerate and scale up our efforts to move to a net-zero economy. This requires a shift to 100% renewable energy, a halving of energy consumption and a significant reduction of resource use by a move to a fully circular economy. It also requires a transformation of our industry, agriculture and transport policies, among others. These actions are also essential to tackling both the climate and biodiversity crises at once.
The ways that we produce and consume energy, grow food, provide shelter, get around and make things will need to be transformed to stop climate change and ensure a better future for both nature and people. At the same time, these actions will work towards increased energy independence and security and contribute to more resilient grids, which have become prominent priorities in the current geopolitical framework to ensure peace and stability for European Citizens and abroad.



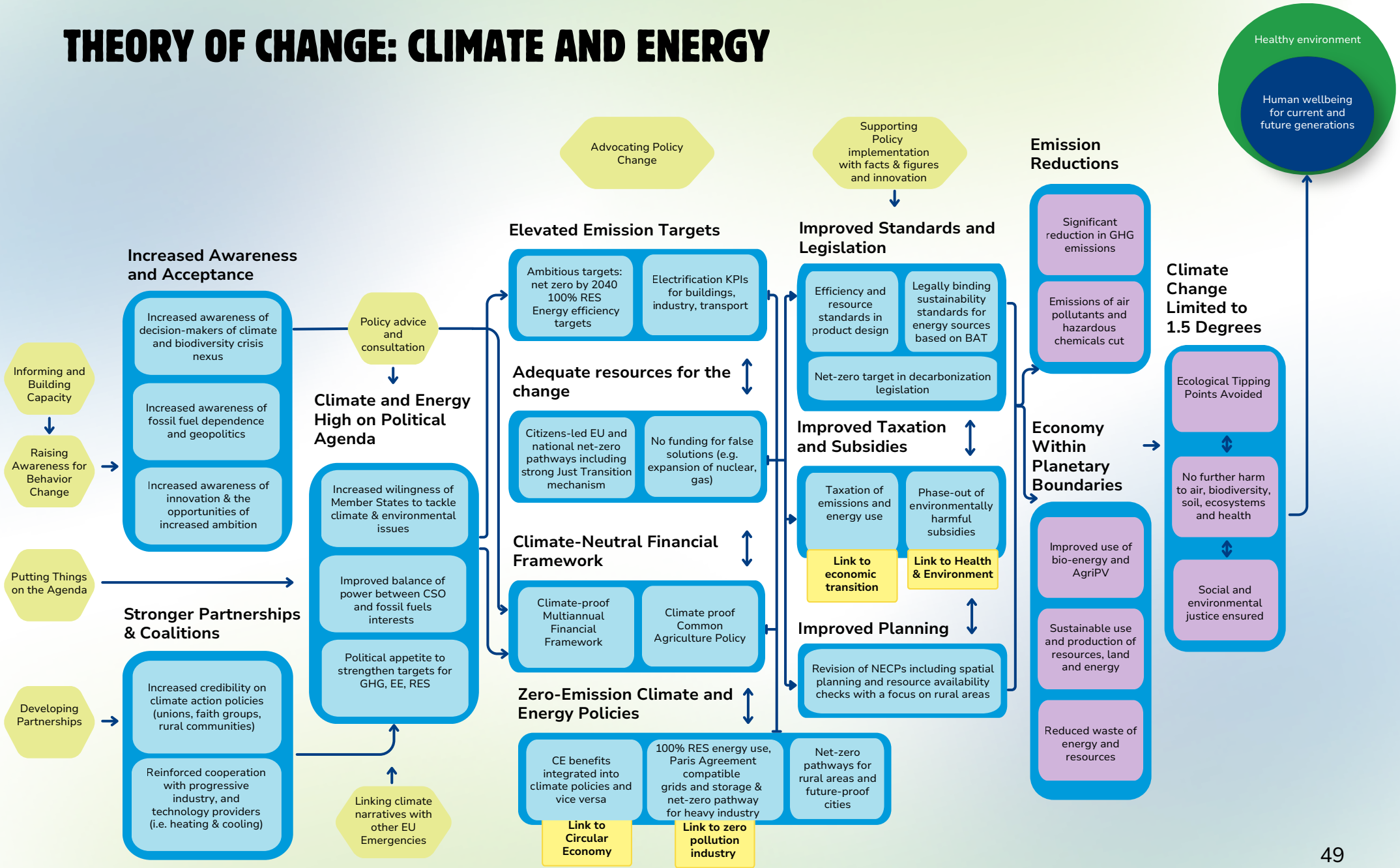
Our Strategy: We will address the key elements required to achieve a **societal transformation towards net-zero emissions** and focus on:

1. Deepen collaboration with **existing and new partners and coalitions, including actors in social policy**, to keep climate action high on the political agenda and present credible solutions;
2. Promoting sufficient, efficient and **renewable energy** and advocating for the **phase-out of fossil fuels, halving of energy demand well before 2050** and the transformation to a highly efficient, **resilient and affordable energy system supplied by 100% nature-compatible renewable energy** and supported by appropriate energy infrastructures;
3. **Decarbonising heating and cooling** through a portfolio of nature-compatible renewable and efficiency solutions which aim at tackling both climate and nature crises and at the same time at cutting costs for households and SME, in particular the most vulnerable ones;
4. Establishing **circular economy policies & modal shifts as an essential enabler of a full decarbonisation** of the economy, including in all sectors of industry, and **achieving net-zero for the EU by 2040**, building on EEB's strong work on circular economy;
5. Promoting **land use** policies that are fully compatible with the Paris Agreement commitments and help restore ecosystems, in particular in the areas of **agriculture, soil and forestry** as well as **nature-based solutions** for marine and terrestrial ecosystems that provide natural carbon sinks (see Nature cluster);

6. Ensuring **strong implementation and a revision of the EU targets and national plans** to bring them in line with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees and in particular foster the role of Sufficiency and Efficiency in this context as a key driver for climate action and increased energy independence.
7. Working on the **financial flows and economic signals** to help catalyse progress leaving no one behind. To make the energy transition a success we must ensure the right economic framework combining policy ambition, policy coherence, economic signals and implementation, including equitable, transparent and tangible distribution of revenues from carbon pricing;
8. Contrasting climate change induced by non-CO2 pollutants such as methane from agriculture and **fluorinated refrigerants**, increasingly linking our work with the massive PFAS pollution crisis and with the need to secure an EU-based supply chain for critical applications in cooling and refrigeration;
9. **Working to debunk fake solutions** in climate action by both matching the climate narrative with the current geopolitical and economic priorities of the EU and fact-checking the lack of scientific base for solutions such as CO2 carbon and capture, nuclear energy and the abuse or misuse of green hydrogen.



THEORY OF CHANGE: CLIMATE AND ENERGY



CHEMICALS

Ending pollution to create a safe environment for people and nature

Context: Chemical pollution is one of the most serious problems facing humanity and other life forms on our planet today. European laws and regulations have already had an enormous impact, but there is still much more to be done.

Toxic substances in our environment have surpassed yet another planetary boundary and have contributed to a rise in severe health problems and are now widely found in the food we eat, the air we breathe and the products we use. EU and global laws and policies on chemical - including pesticides –pollution can help protect us from these threats and clean up the natural world.

Global pollution is not only the world's largest environmental cause of disease and premature death but also endangers the stability of the Earth's ecosystems and threatens the continuing survival of human societies. Pollution is a profound health crisis with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable persons including women and children, and future generations, which infringes on the fundamental human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. We have the tools to drastically cut pollution and help create a safe environment for people and nature.



Our Strategy: We will work towards reducing the production, use, emission and release of and exposure to polluting and harmful substances and sources. We will support the switch to safe, sustainable, circular and decarbonised methods of production; and work for a swift reduction of harmful substances in all sectors and pollution from all sources.

We will push for a toxic-free environment and net-zero pollution by:

1. **Increasing public awareness and raising pressure on decision-makers**, notably thanks to engagement with various stakeholders such as affected communities, influencers, workers, trade unions or frontrunning companies;
2. **Demanding new political and legal commitments** at European and national levels;
3. **Improving the implementation and enforcement** of existing laws and regulations at European and national level;
4. **Ensuring inclusive and transparent governance** by:

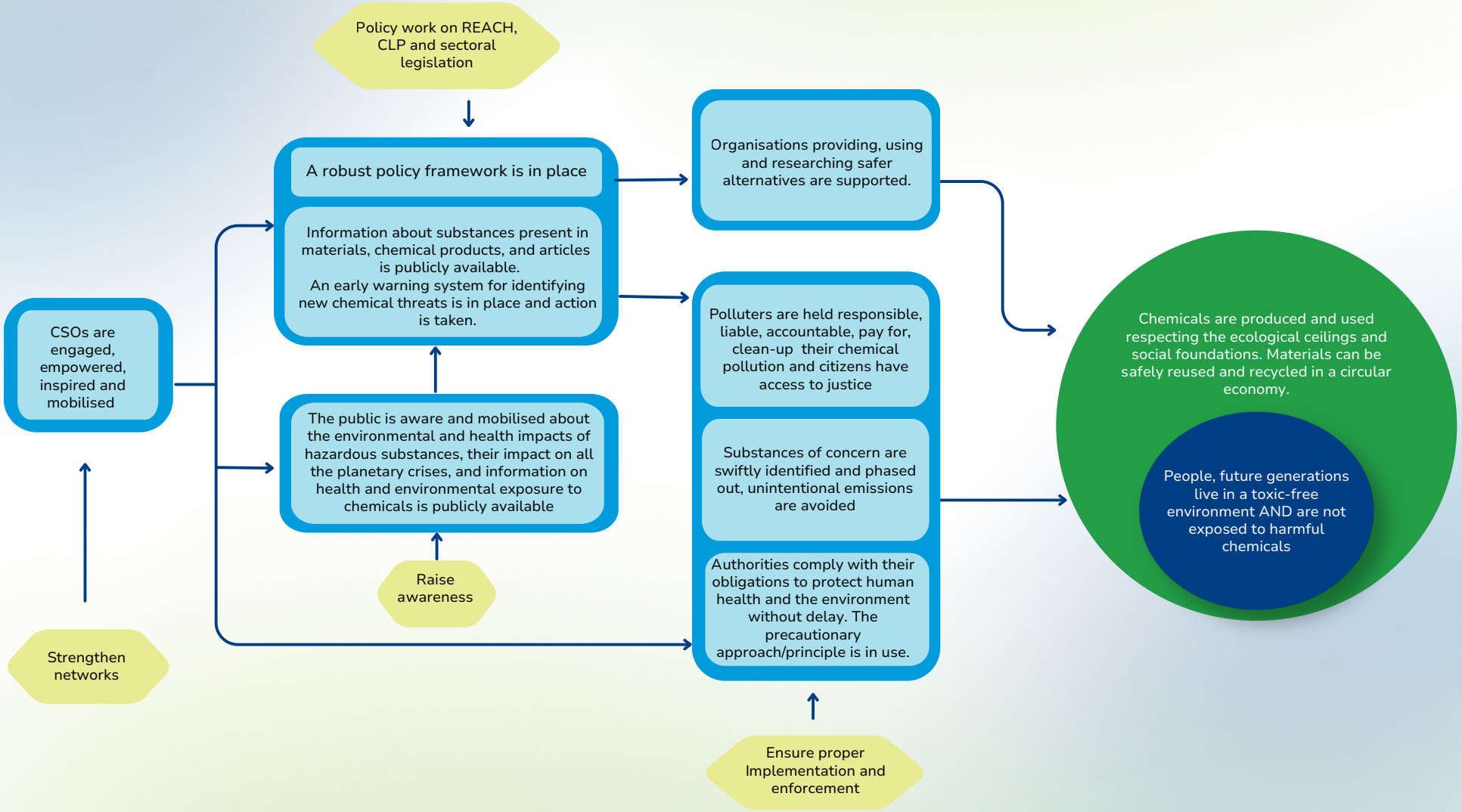
- implementing democratic and environmental principles enshrined in the EU and international law and jurisprudence;
- considering the social implications of any legislation and policy;
- increasing accountability of decision- makers and industry;

5. **Regular high-quality monitoring and assessment** by:

- developing relevant IT tools for improved access to environmental information and public participation; and
- monitoring and assessing the enforcement of existing legislation.

These objectives would be mainly achieved through the area of work of a Toxic-Free Environment. The areas of work under the policy area of Chemicals have strong links and interfaces with Climate, Circular Economy, Zero Pollution, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Finance and trade, Economic Transition and Environmental Justice issues (see also other relevant chapters).

THEORY OF CHANGE: CHEMICALS



MERCURY

'Zero' Mercury Exposure, Supply, Demand, Emissions and Releases from Anthropogenic sources, to create a safe environment for people and nature

Context: Mercury and its compounds are highly toxic; they can damage the nervous system and are particularly harmful to foetal development. Mercury 'travels' globally, bioaccumulates up through the food chain, especially in certain predatory fish, and presents a human exposure risk.
An EU Mercury Strategy was established in 2005, and several directives and regulations have been adopted since then. The 2017 EU mercury regulation, revised in 2024, includes a mercury export ban, trade provisions, bans for mercury-added processes and products, including dental amalgam, measuring devices, batteries, lamps and others. Through our work on mercury-added cosmetics (see below), the EEB has been following policies related to online sales; due to the delays in the elimination of their production internationally, online marketplaces have been amplifying the availability of these dangerous products. The mercury-added skin-lightening products (Hg/SLPs) challenge has come to global attention, and the enforcement of the ban needs to be strengthened. A robust EU approach needs to drive the global debate.

The EEB has been following global developments and launched the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG)2 (2005). The 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury aims to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic mercury emissions, was ratified in 2017 and currently has 153 Parties. Six Conferences of the Parties (COPs) have taken place since 2017. COP5 and 6 decisions brought more attention to the problematic of HgSLPs and banned the manufacture and trade of dental amalgam.

The EEB/ZMWG has been following all issues related to mercury with a focus, recently, on mercury-added products and processes, supply and trade of mercury, mercury compounds, and artisanal small-scale gold mining.

It has been contributing to the implementation and enforcement of the Convention provisions and supporting developing countries' NGOs and governments. In 2017, a major campaign on HgSLPs was launched. COP6 decided to further work on the manufacture and trade of HgSLPs and mercury compounds, also addressing colourism aspects.

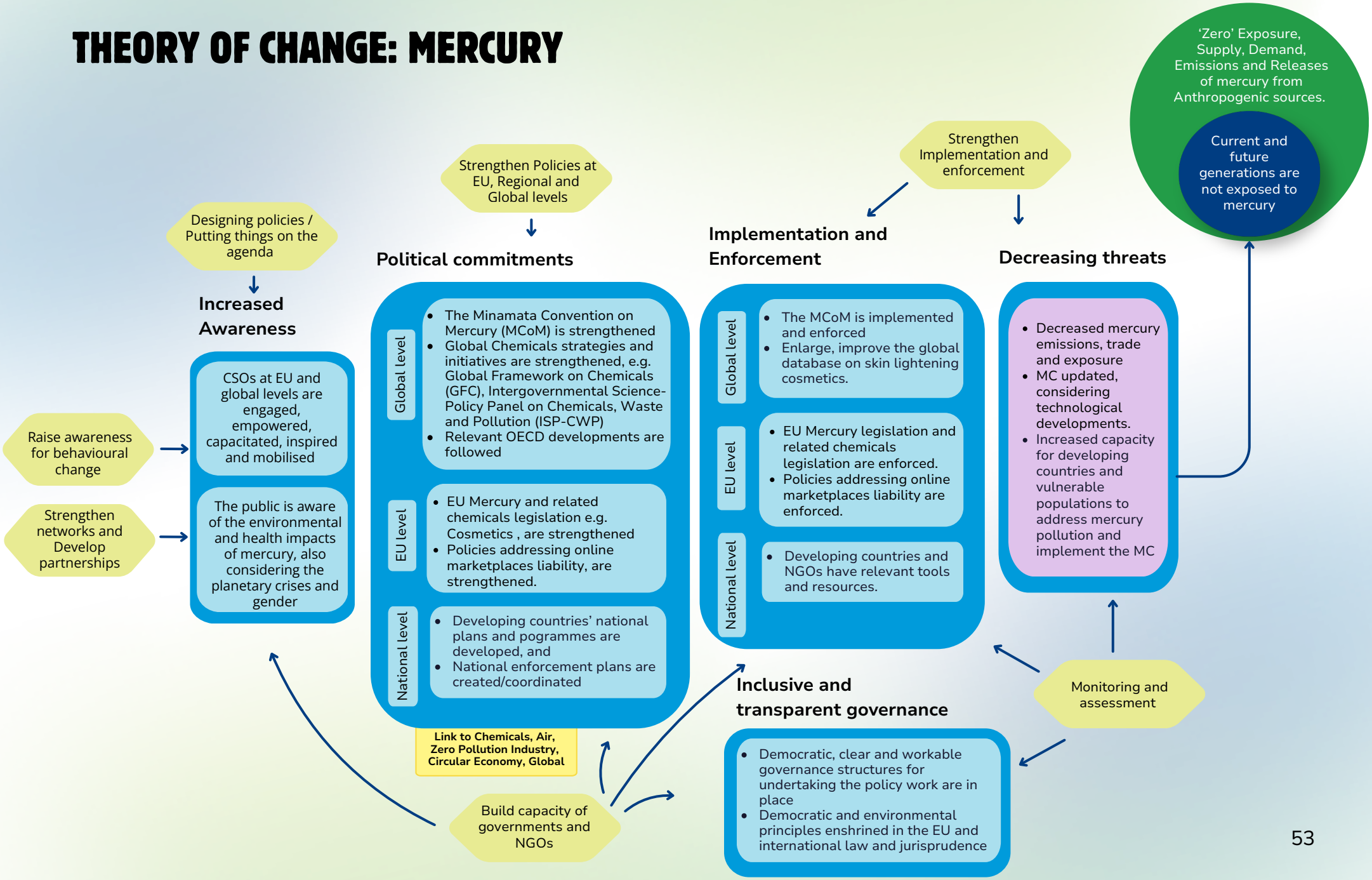
Our Strategy: We will work towards reducing and, where possible, eliminating mercury supply, trade, use, emissions, releases and exposure from anthropogenic sources by:

1. **Sustaining and strengthening the ZMWG as well as developing partnerships.**
2. **Design, contribute and strengthen policies at EU, regional and global levels**, including the Minamata Convention by broadening the scope of products and industrial processes, where mercury should be phased out; as well as sources of supply and emissions.
3. **Strengthen implementation and enforcement of global, EU and national legislation**, including strengthening the capacity of developing country governments and NGOs.
4. **Ensure democratic, clear and workable governance structures** for arranging and undertaking the policy work required by the Convention
5. **Raise awareness on mercury** of developing country NGOs, governments and targeted stakeholders.

Mercury work has strong links and interfaces with Chemicals, Circular Economy, Zero Pollution, Air, Climate, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Financial and trade, Economic Transition and Environmental Justice issues (see also other relevant chapters).



THEORY OF CHANGE: MERCURY



ZERO POLLUTION INDUSTRY

Making Europe's industry a global leader in clean transformation – decarbonised, detoxified and restorative

Context: Industry plays a vital role in providing jobs, fostering personal and community pride, and generating income. However, it also remains a significant source of environmental pollution, negatively affecting people's health and quality of life. Environmental pollution is linked to a range of diseases, including cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease, and neurological disorders.

Pollution is also one of the five main causes of biodiversity loss. It represents a significant cost for society, in terms not only of health-related expenditures, but also of reduced yields (in agriculture, fisheries and tourism), as well as remediation costs (water treatment, soil decontamination, marine depollution) and loss of ecosystem services.

Air pollution is the prime environmental factor driving disease, with its greatest contributor being combustion processes, in particular combustion of fossil fuels and biomass for energy generation. A 2021 EEA briefing reports that in 2017, air pollution emitted from large industrial sites in Europe cost society between €277 and €433 billion (about 2-3 % of EU GDP that year).



Industrial sources further have a significant contribution to soil and water pollution: the main reason for the failure of good chemical status in over 30% of EU's surface water bodies is the atmospheric deposition of mercury with coal combustion being the main emission source to air in the EU.

We will continue our work, in the next five years, to ensure that the EU's Clean Industrial Deal delivers for both people and the planet. True competitiveness cannot come from further degrading our environment, health, or social fabric.

Our Strategy: We will continue to advocate for the urgently needed shift towards a zero-pollution, toxic-free, socially just and decarbonised EU industrial framework, aligned with the joint industry-NGO 'Vision for a prosperous and sustainable industry: a positive blueprint for the future'. Our vision includes the following core priorities:

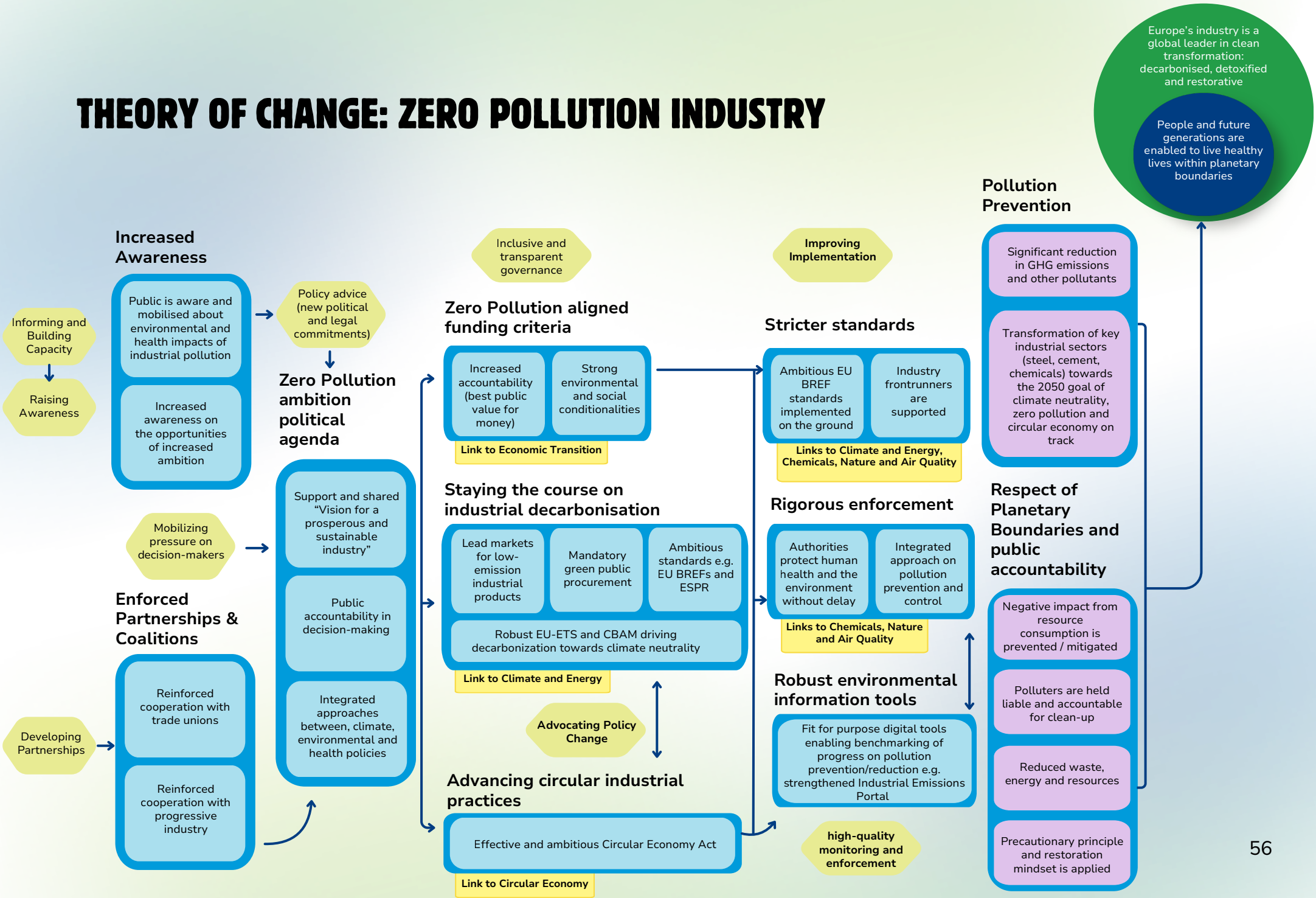
- **Staying the course on industrial decarbonisation by supporting frontrunners and creating lead markets** for low-emission industrial products, including through mandatory green public procurement.
- **Increased accountability, environmental and social conditionalities for the spending of public money.**
- **Systematically integrating public health objectives** and related ambitious standards across all legislation under the Clean Industrial Deal, to avoid siloed approaches between climate, environmental, and health policies.
- **Advancing circular industrial practices** through an ambitious and effective Circular Economy Act.

We will pursue these priorities, with increased cross-team collaboration, by:

1. **Increasing public awareness and mobilising pressure on decision-makers**; to ensure our advocacy tactics remain effective and are future-proof, we will continue collaborating with progressive industry actors and exchanging with trade unions;
2. **Calling for new political and legal commitments at global, regional, EU, and national levels**;
3. **Improving the implementation and enforcement of existing laws** and regulations, including at the global level;
4. **Ensuring inclusive and transparent governance**, by upholding democratic and environmental principles enshrined in EU and international law and jurisprudence and by strengthening accountability of decision-makers and industry.
2. **Ensuring regular, high-quality monitoring and assessment**, by developing robust digital tools to improve access to environmental information and enable meaningful public participation, and by monitoring and evaluating the implementation and enforcement of existing legislation.



THEORY OF CHANGE: ZERO POLLUTION INDUSTRY



AIR QUALITY & NOISE

Clean Air and reduced noise: Towards zero environmental and health impact

Context: Air and noise pollution remain Europe's first and second biggest environmental health risk.

Exposure to air pollution causes around 300,000 premature deaths in Europe in 2023 and several morbidities, including strokes, asthma attacks, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer. Vulnerable groups such as elderly people, pregnant women, unborn babies and children and people with pre-conditions are suffering the most.

In 2021 alone, prolonged exposure to transport noise in Europe was linked to an estimated 66,000 premature deaths, 50,000 new cases of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) and 22,000 new cases of type 2 diabetes. In total over 1.3 million healthy life years were lost in Europe due to noise pollution.

Ecosystems and biodiversity are also suffering the consequences of air and noise pollution, through eutrophication and acidification and interferences with the natural fauna.

Air and noise pollution are very hardly hampering the human right to live in a healthy environment.



Our Strategy: We will work towards reducing the production of and exposure to air and noise pollution, by supporting the role of both source policies and legislation and horizontal instruments dealing with air quality and by demanding action to reduce noise pollution.

We will push for net-zero air pollution by:

1. **Increasing public awareness and raising pressure on decision-makers**, notably thanks to engagement with various stakeholders such as citizens groups, health experts, academia and progressive businesses;
2. **Demanding new political and legal commitments at global, regional, EU and national levels**, including an ambitious UNECE Gothenburg Protocol, a revision of the National Emission reduction Commitments Directive and a throughout review of the Ambient Air Quality Directive;
3. **Demanding the needed commitment, reflecting scientific evidence**, to cut air pollution at source, in particular form domestic heating, shipping and agriculture;
4. **Improving the implementation and enforcement of existing laws**, including the Ambient Air Quality Directive and the National Emission reduction Commitments Directive, and regulations at global, European Union and national level, including the UNECE Gothenburg Protocol;

5. **Ensuring inclusive and transparent governance** by:

- implementing democratic and environmental principles enshrined in the EU and international law and jurisprudence;
- considering the social implications of any legislation and policy;
- increasing accountability of decision- makers and industry;
- **Regular high-quality monitoring and assessment of the enforcement of existing legislation;**

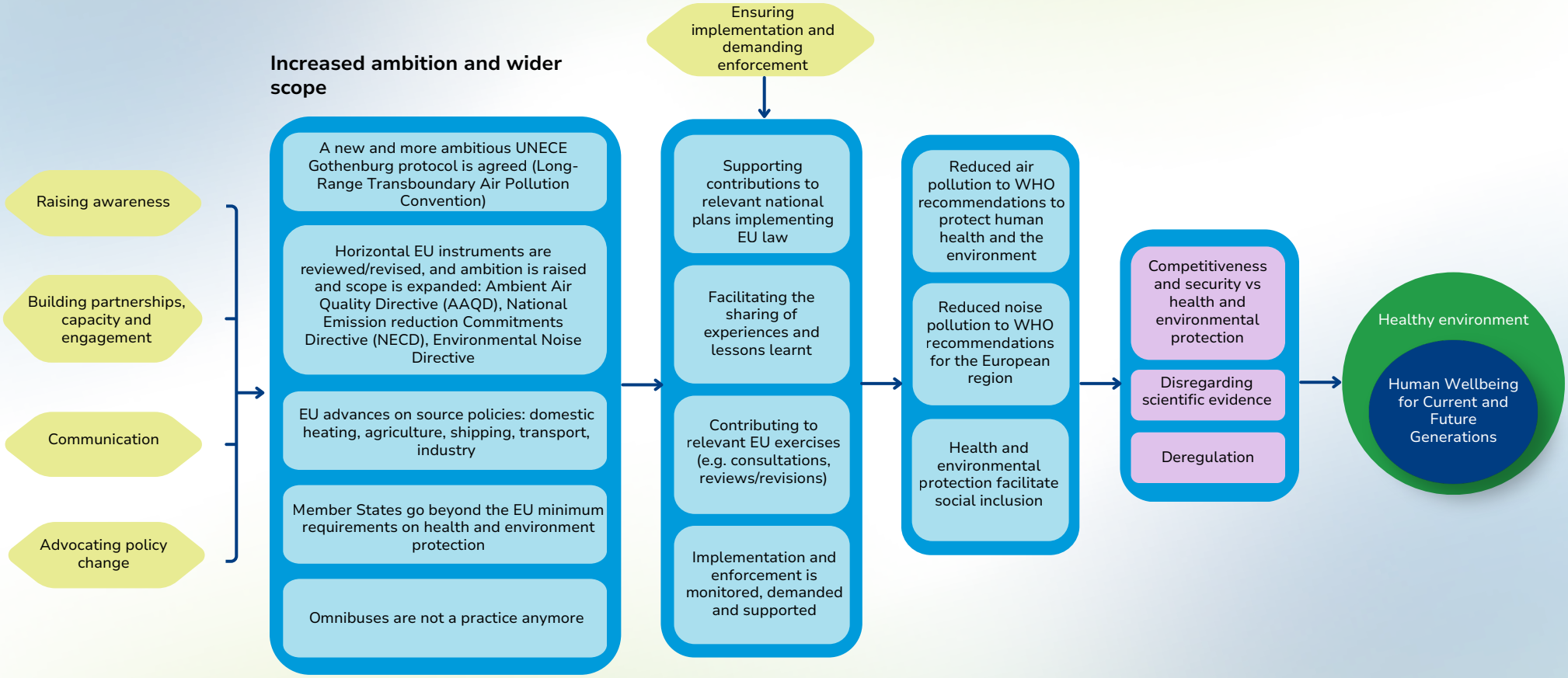
6. **Monitoring and promoting the development of scientific evidence and political attention and action** about pollutants of emerging concern (e.g. black carbon, ultra fine particles, heavy metals, also supporting the work conducted by the chemicals working group on micro and nano plastics, PFAS and pesticides).

In addition, with the support of interested members, we will seek opportunities to tackle noise pollution, in particular by demanding the definition of ambitious legislation, including the revision of the Environmental Noise Directive.

The areas of work under the Pollution cluster – Chemicals, Nanomaterials, Mercury, Industry, Air, Noise and Light - have strong links and interfaces with Climate, Circular Economy, Agriculture, Biodiversity, and Financial and trade, Economic Transition and Environmental Justice issues (see also other relevant chapters).



THEORY OF CHANGE: AIR QUALITY & NOISE




POWERING OUR
MISSION

COMMUNICATIONS

Building influence, platforms and community through smart communications.

Communications is a strategic function that enables the organisation to influence public debate, support advocacy objectives, strengthen the network, build trust with key audiences and grow our reach and community. Communications is not only about visibility but also about influence, credibility, engagement, and long-term relationship-building.

Towards 2030, our communications work will be guided by the principle of smart communications – a strategic, audience-focused and data-informed approach that combines narrative framing, media engagement, digital platforms, partnerships and analytics to maximise influence and impact.

The media and information landscape has changed significantly in recent years. Audiences are fragmented, digital platforms increasingly shape public debate, and organisations must communicate directly with audiences to build trust and influence. Visibility alone is no longer sufficient; influence depends on credibility, consistency, community and the ability to engage audiences across different platforms and formats.



At the same time, environmental advocacy increasingly depends on public legitimacy, alliances and societal support, not only technical expertise and policy engagement. Communications, therefore, plays a significant role in ensuring visibility, credibility and influence across political, media and public audiences.
As a network organisation, our impact also depends on our ability to support and amplify the communications work of our members and partners, align narratives across the network and strengthen collective visibility and influence at European and national level.

To remain effective and influential towards 2030, we must continue to strengthen our communications capacity, platforms, infrastructure, partnerships and audience engagement.

Our communications work is organised as an integrated influence system built around three complementary functions: shaping narratives, reaching audiences, and building the infrastructure and intelligence that make influence possible.

- **Press and editorial work** shape narratives, frame debates and build credibility among policymakers, journalists and opinion leaders.
- **Social media and digital storytelling** expand reach, engage (new) audiences and help shape cultural and public narratives around environmental, social, and economic issues.
- **Web, CRM and analytics infrastructure** build the digital platforms, data systems and communities that enable direct communication, audience engagement and data-informed decision-making.

Together, these functions form an integrated communications ecosystem that allows us to influence debate, build trust, grow our audiences and strengthen our long-term advocacy impact.

Towards 2030, our communications priorities include:

- Strengthening strategic communications support for advocacy and policy work.
- Building and developing our own platforms, channels and communities across Europe.
- Supporting and coordinating communications across our network to increase collective reach and impact.
- Working with media, partners and trusted messengers to amplify credible voices and messages.
- Investing in digital infrastructure, analytics and audience insight to continuously improve our communications work.

Through this smart communications approach, we aim to increase our visibility, influence and resilience, helping to ensure that environmental solutions are understood, supported and politically possible towards 2030.

By 2030, our goal is to operate effectively in a world where narratives shape politics – defending truth where it is challenged, and building influence where decisions are made.



MEMBERSHIP, PARTNERSHIPS, GOVERNANCE AND EVENTS

Halfway through the Long-Term Strategy 2020-2030, we are building on progress made, reaffirming our priorities for 2026–2030, and **increasing our focus on strengthening our members' resilience** in an increasingly challenging context as well as **putting in place our own youth engagement strategy**. We will continue to defend the role of civil society and the importance of participatory democracy. We will **step up our efforts to provide skill-sharing and capacity building** for our members that tackle the main challenges that the environmental movement is facing (deregulation, disinformation, fake news, de-prioritisation of environmental protection, shrinking funding etc.). We will think cleverly around how we can best **share resources to build resilience**.

Consolidating and enhancing membership services will allow us to better support members through capacity-building, collaborative fundraising, targeted training, and stronger outreach, while maintaining high retention rates and an impactful and engaged membership.

Membership: Building on our organic growth approach and strategic outreach to address topics or geographical areas where the EEB is underrepresented or not yet represented, we have so far welcomed around 30 new members since 2020. Our aim remains to have a diverse and dynamic membership of some 180-220 environmental organisations by the end of 2030.



This will further strengthen our position as the most comprehensive network of environmental citizens' groups in Europe, demonstrate our representativeness and legitimacy, increase our access to key decision-makers and, consequently, our influence and impact.

Partnerships: We will continue to enter partnerships and engage with alliances and coalitions where and to the extent that these bring real added value and help the EEB to achieve its mission and increase our joint impact (for instance around the 2029 European Parliament elections). We will also continue to be part of strategic, cross-sectoral coalitions and continue our tradition of working with like-minded stakeholders beyond our membership, such as social, consumer and development NGOs, thinktanks, trade unions and progressive businesses.

Governance: In 2022, the EEB successfully implemented a comprehensive governance reform and put in place a smaller Board and a new Council that focuses on horizontal policy matters and membership mobilisation. Over the period 2026-2030 we will continue to evaluate and fine-tune the roles and functions of the governance bodies to make sure that they remain fit for purpose, attractive to join and maximise membership engagement. This will include reflections on the potential need for other task forces or structures (fundraising task force, environmental leaders' group, youth group, communications group etc.).

Events: Following the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a global shift in how events were organised. Remote work is now an everyday reality; hybrid events have become the norm. The EEB has adapted and is continuously learning how to organise even more attractive, interactive and impactful (hybrid) events.

Over the coming years, we will continue to learn from peers, explore new digital engagement tools, review our events and office space revenue model and make sure that our events are as inclusive as possible. Further improvements in our approach to audience segmentation, targeted outreach and event management tools are also part of the priorities for the years to come.

Over the coming years, we will aim to

1. Engage in **targeted outreach to attract more members to join** in areas/on topics where we are underrepresented;
2. Continuously improve **and increase our capacity building and skill sharing offer for members** on key topics to help build resilience in the environmental movement, with the support of joint fundraising;
3. **Put in place our own youth engagement strategy** to ensure that our network remains fit for purpose for generations to come;
4. Enter new/**further develop existing partnerships and coalition-work to increase our joint impact ahead of the 2029 European elections;**
5. **Evaluate and fine-tune our governance structures** to ensure effectiveness, attractiveness and maximise membership engagement;
6. **Further improve the tools, outreach and revenue model for attractive and impactful events**.

Priorities and actions

1. Improve the **membership benefits** package and services for the period 2028-2032;
2. Establish **training and capacity building** schemes for EEB members and environmental advocates;
3. **Increase the number of joint projects** with and between EEB members;
4. Implement and evaluate the EEB's Membership Engagement Plan;
5. Implement and evaluate the EEB's Events Strategy.

Expected results

1. Our members are more resilient and better equipped to navigate a fast-evolving geopolitical context and attacks on civil society;
2. Our work with members and in coalitions contribute to a strong voice for civil society and impactful actions in connection with the 2029 European Parliament elections;
3. Our governance structures are fit for purpose and our elections attract both seasoned leaders and young environmentalists to engage;
4. Our events are well-attended and impactful;
5. Broadened and deepened representation at national and European level keep strengthening the content of our work and the legitimacy of our voice;
6. EEB is recognised as the most comprehensive umbrella network and key go-to network for environmental advocacy.

Indicators

1. Numbers of members, diversity among new members (size, thematic focus, geographical spread) and membership satisfaction rates;
2. Membership retention and resignation rates;
3. Number and diversity of candidates for EEB elections;
4. Number of trainings and capacity building opportunities offered and satisfaction rates;
5. Number of joint projects within the network;
6. Number of events and satisfaction rates.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

As an organisation, the EEB will continue to strive to live up to its values of democracy, fairness, respect, integrity and sustainability, and to be a place where everyone can thrive in an inclusive, just, healthy and supportive work environment. We are committed to going further to ensure the diversity of our staff at all levels of the organisation in terms of origin, personal and professional experience, age, gender and sexual identity, socio-economic background and any other relevant factor. Our strength lies in diverse perspectives and experiences.

Following a period of rapid staff expansion in the EEB Secretariat team in the first years of implementing this strategy, our focus now is staff development and retention, ensuring well-being and adherence to all relevant health and safety measures.

In a time of increasing competition and restrictions around funding for civil society, we strive to raise the funding necessary to ensure sufficient staff capacity to cover all essential policy areas and communication skills, as well as resources for people-centred HR and admin, robust financial management, and impactful governance, membership and events, in order to achieve our mission without staff members being overstretched.

As the organisation has grown, management processes have developed in step. The EEB will continue to adapt, where necessary, internal processes to be efficient and well-coordinated, and will review the recent change process to ensure all processes and tools are fit for purpose. Key documents will be updated to ensure compliance with Belgian employment law, in close collaboration with elected staff representatives and trade union delegates, and we will continue to develop policies and benefits, striving for best practices in the sector and beyond.

We will evaluate our team structures and organigramme, with the aim of improving internal coordination and efficiency, and the right level of delegation and share of responsibilities across teams. Teams will increasingly work in a cross-cutting, horizontal and flexible way. We seek to ensure training and support to team leads and managers, and to have a senior and junior person covering all key topics the EEB works on to make us less vulnerable and reliant on one person.

We will build a secure and sustainable IT infrastructure for a hybrid office that withstands threats and embraces emerging technologies to ensure we have a high cyber security, an ethical and legally compliant AI use, and competent and confident users.



We will make sure to walk the talk and take action to monitor and to further reduce, where possible, our own environmental impact when it comes to our office, operations, activities, events and travels.

Priorities and actions

1. Securing funding for sustainable and stable staffing levels to implement this Long-Term Strategy;
2. Implement and evaluate staff wellbeing measures and training plans;
3. Review and strengthen strategies to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion;
4. Review and strengthen strategies to reduce the EEB's environmental impact;
5. Develop and implement the IT strategy including measures on cybersecurity and AI tools;
6. Develop and implement the office management strategy.

Expected results

1. An attractive, inclusive, supportive and just workplace that offers flexibility and community for staff and a highly skilled, healthy, diverse and motivated team;

Indicators

1. Staff wellbeing, retention and satisfaction rates;
2. Number of staff training and capacity building opportunities offered and satisfaction rates;
3. Level of diversity (age, gender, origin, etc.) of staff body.



FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT

Halfway through the Long-Term Strategy period, the EEB operates in a more volatile political and financial environment than in 2020. Increasing political polarisation and sustained pressure on civil society space and the organisations that underpin it have reshaped the European public and philanthropic funding landscape and exacerbated the gap between the available resources and the scale and complexity of the challenges civil society is expected to address.

Over the past years, the EEB has simultaneously broadened its scope of work to respond to this evolving landscape and address cross-cutting challenges (specifically disinformation, attacks on civil society space and deregulation risks), while continuously coordinating and mobilising our membership. This has been supported by a diversified funding portfolio and long-standing partnerships.

Consequently, to remain impactful and resilient in these complex times, we will deepen our strategic relationships with philanthropy and a broader set of funders. We will also prioritise initiatives that enable us to respond to important emerging issues and to build solid membership capacity and resilience. This also necessitates further strengthening our organisational systems - investing in the foundations that support effective management and governance underpinning strategic choices and organisational sustainability.



The next five years are critical for strengthening fundraising to safeguard the EEB's independence and long-term effectiveness, and to contribute to a more resilient, coordinated network, maximising our collective impact across Europe and beyond.

Solid fundraising partnerships for resilience and impact: We will continue to strengthen our long-term relationships with both existing and potential donors, building on a clearer mutual understanding of our respective needs, priorities and ways of working. To complement existing partnerships, we will strive to further diversity our funding portfolio in support of long-term stability in view of potential political and funding volatility. The EEB will continuously ensure that any potential support is aligned with the EEB's values and mission. To reinforce collaboration and alignment within the environmental movement, we will prioritise joint projects and initiatives that allow us to engage with EU-level partners as well as national members. This will ensure that our efforts are complementary and contribute to a stronger, more cohesive network. In a period marked by uncertainty, it is also essential that we further expand sources of flexible funding as well as funding for organisational development and capacity building of the EEB's entire network. This will give us the agility and tools to predict trends and respond to the moment, amplifying our policy impact and long-term resilience.

Strong financial management with adequate reserves to sustain the EEB's work and mission: Over the next five years, the EEB will prioritise efforts that strengthen its financial foundations and ensure long-term resilience, independence and strategic autonomy. The EEB will continue to build adequate financial reserves to ensure resilience in these volatile times, following a transparent, gradual approach in line with good governance principles.

We will develop complementary income streams, including revenue linked to events, training, capacity building, individual donations and other mission-aligned activities, while ensuring full consistency with our due diligence policy and safeguarding independence from any potentially compromising sources. We will strengthen the systems and tools that enable efficient collaboration, management and financial governance across the organisation. This includes modernising financial and fundraising systems, increasing automation where appropriate, and reducing unnecessary administrative burden. Clearer processes, reliable data and consistent financial planning will support better strategic decision-making. Finally, we will invest in financial literacy and shared ownership across teams. By providing clearer tools for budgeting, reporting and financial forecasting, we aim to strengthen collaboration between programme teams and finance, improve risk anticipation, and embed financial responsibility as a collective organisational practice rather than a siloed function.

Priorities and actions:

1. Enhancing **strategic donor relationships** through structured and regular exchanges on shared contexts, challenges, opportunities and the types of support that can create the greatest impact.
2. Strengthen cooperation with **EU-level partners and national members**: expanding shared priorities, but discussing as well as sharing insights and opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and alignment across the movement can be regularly exchanged.
3. Identify new opportunities to develop and **diversify flexible income streams**, both for policy impacts in a changing world and to invest in the EEB's organisational development to strengthen our impact.
4. Ensure all sources of funding are appropriate, following EEB's **due diligence** checks.
5. Further enhance **financial, project-management and fundraising systems** to improve effectiveness in resource allocation and planning and financial and strategic governance.
6. Building **organisational capacity and autonomy** across teams through targeted support, governance and training

Expected results: enhancing impacts across the EEB's focus, namely:

1. Sufficient resources to support the EEB in achieving its mission and vision
2. Effective finance and project management systems
3. Financial Resilience



These, in turn, would enable;

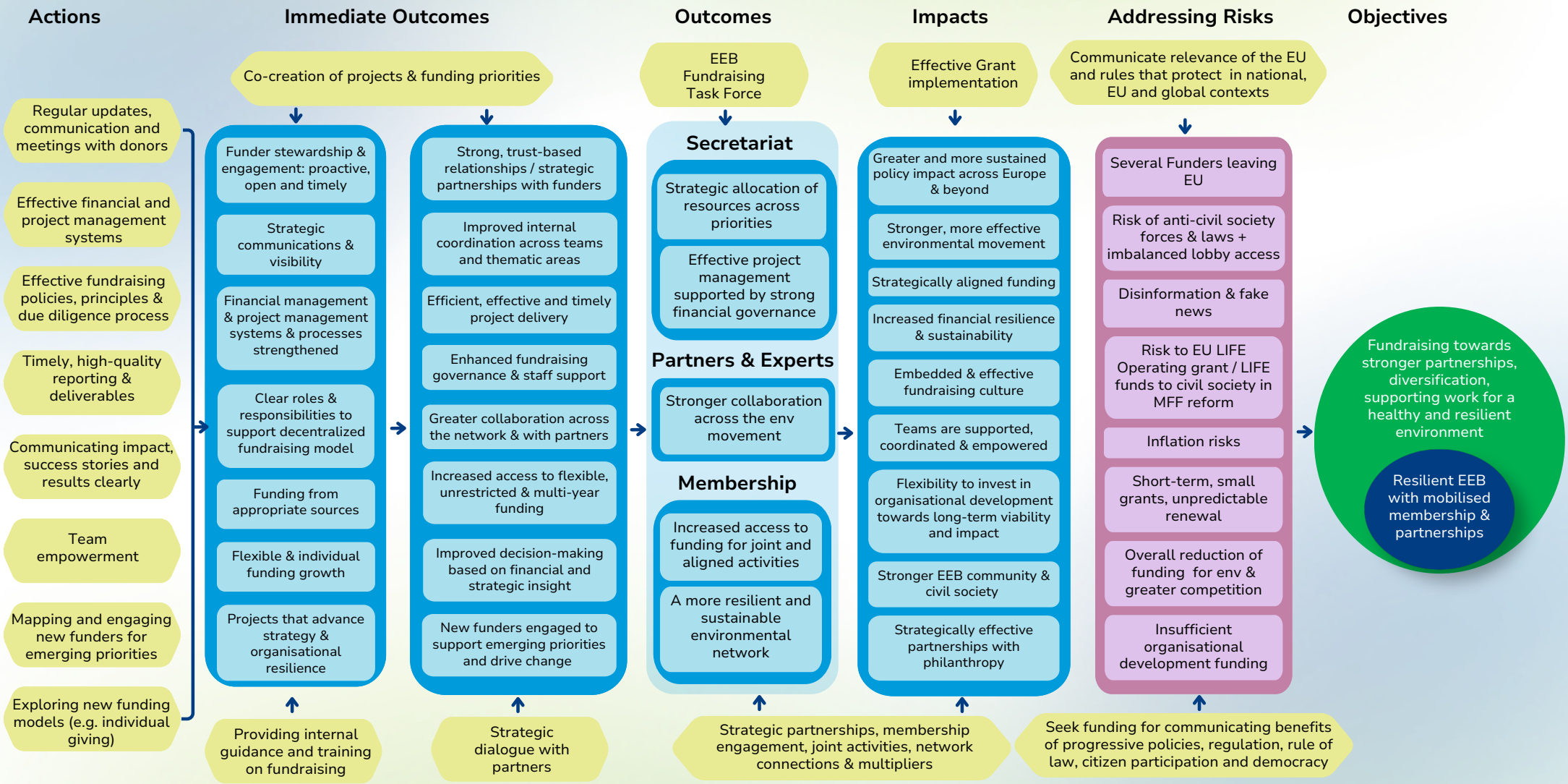
- Engaging, effective and impactful advocacy work
- Defending environmental policy and civil society space considering the new political climate
- Movement mobilisation
- Strengthening and engaging existing partners as well as collaboration beyond traditional partners
- Enhancing our communication and outreach to raise awareness and reach new audiences
- Promoting an agenda of hope and a positive narrative,
- Supporting implementation of policy and laws throughout Member States by supportive EU policy and funding, and by capacity building and support to our members mobilisation and actions.

Indicators

- Strong partnerships with growing number of funders
- Cost-covering projects with fair contribution to operations and overheads
- Diverse and appropriate funding sources for resilience
- Sufficient reserves relative to turnover for security
- Number of projects with partners and members
- Number of projects with flexible and/or unrestricted funding
- Number of multi-year and repeat projects



THEORY OF CHANGE: FUNDRAISING



GET IN TOUCH! GET ENGAGED!

Get involved.

Help shape what comes next.

After reading our Long-Term Strategy to 2030, you have seen what we aim to achieve - and the scale of the challenges ahead.

Turning this vision into reality requires a strong, connected movement. Whether you want to collaborate, contribute, or simply stay informed, there are many ways to engage with us.

Become a member

The EEB is the only European umbrella organisation covering such a wide range of environmental policy issues while remaining open to membership for all genuine environmental NGOs. This makes us a unique and unifying force with a strong voice in EU and international policymaking.

Join us - discover the benefits in our membership section and get in touch with membership.team@eeb.org

Engage in Policy & Build the Movement

We need a strong alliance of organisations and individuals pushing for an ambitious, hopeful environmental agenda.

Join the movement, contribute to policy discussions, and help drive systemic change. Learn more about our work and how to get involved on our website.

Support Our Work

From major funding to small contributions, every bit of support helps sustain our work.

Buy us a coffee and be part of the change.

Stay Connected

- Subscribe to our weekly newsletter the New Leaf to stay up to date
- Follow us on: LinkedIn | Instagram | TikTok | Bluesky | Substack
- Visit: www.eeb.org



EEB
European
Environmental
Bureau

UPDATED LONG TERM STRATEGY 2026-2030

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