EU MATTERS
NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News

February 2019

Agriculture

[Citizens are fed up with industrial agriculture](#)

Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was a big issue at this year's Green Week in Berlin. With all the billions of euros available, the agro-ecological transition is more than possible, especially if subsidies to agribusiness and factory farms were stopped.

[Agriculture's excessive impact on nature, planet and health under fire](#)

A vote in the European Parliament's Environment committee has seen MEPs back higher environmental ambition in the EU's farm subsidy scheme. The vote comes as campaigners calling for a rethink of how we grow, share and consume our food in line with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launch a new EU-wide petition calling for an end to the current system of EU subsidies which heavily support damaging intensive agriculture.

[Call for CAP regulations to include quantified environmental targets to be met by Member States by 2027.](#)

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) reiterates its call for a minimum of 30% of the national payments envelope to be devoted to eco-schemes — measures going beyond the basic climate and environmental conditionality requirements — and for quantified targets to be included in the regulations.

Air Quality

[EU Vehicle Emissions laws improved since #Dieselgate, but challenges remain, warn auditors](#)

EU laws on vehicle emissions have been improved since the Dieselgate scandal, but challenges remain, according to the European Court of Auditors. The auditors welcome the improvements in market surveillance but point out that its effectiveness depends on implementation by the member states. They also warn that manufacturers may find ways around the new testing systems which have been introduced and that scope for independent third-party testing may be limited because of the high costs involved.

Biodiversity

[Last chance for nature as 'insectageddon' bites](#)

Protected sites and wildlife face a barrage of illegal threats from damage or potential destruction – meaning EU governments are set to miss their own goal of stopping nature loss by 2020.

Circular Economy

[Circular economy must remain a priority for Europe beyond the 2019 elections](#)

The Circular Economy Package and Plastics Strategy have set a high-level framework to improve the resource efficiency of the European economy. But to be effective, this framework must remain a policy priority for the next European Commission and Parliament.

[Embedding sustainable thinking in public procurement could support circular economy](#)

A circular economy (CE) is one in which materials retain their value and are reused, minimising waste. Cities and councils could act as CE trailblazers by embedding this approach whenever possible into their public purchase of products, services and works. This study explored different approaches to circular public procurement (CPP), and identified possible opportunities to promote CE via appropriate procurement policy and criteria.

Northern Ireland environment link

Brexit: *Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).*

Climate Action

[EC publishes evaluation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](#)

The European Commission recently published its evaluation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change. IEEP was part of the research team which helped prepare the evaluation report and Adaptation Preparedness Scoreboards for all Member States.

Energy

['It's complicated': EU offers political backing but no funding for CCS](#)

The European Commission has backed carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a one of the seven key technologies enabling a deep decarbonisation of Europe's economy by mid-century. But it's still tangled in bureaucracy when it comes to funding procedures.

[How the building sector can contribute to a climate-neutral Europe](#)

The building sector is responsible for 40 percent of energy consumption, as well as greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the EU. As such, the decarbonisation potential within this sector is great. Energy efficiency, including zero-emissions buildings, is one of the pathways the EU strategy for a climate-neutral Europe lists as a way to achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050

Freshwater

[New Commission report on Member State progress in implementing EU water policy](#)

The European Commission has just published a new report analysing the second River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the first Flood Risk Management Plans under the Flood Directive, which both cover the period between 2015 and 2021. The WFD, which was introduced in 2000, aims to ensure that by 2027 at the latest all 111,000 EU surface water bodies and 13,000 groundwater bodies reach "good status"[1], unless there are good reasons for exemption.

[Combining behavioural change and game-like incentive models encourages consumers to save water](#)

Domestic water saving is important — not only to address water scarcity and drought, but also to save energy and tackle climate change. Water-management strategies are needed to prevent these shortages, and include incentives to change consumers' behaviour concerning water use. This study examines the design of a behaviour-change system and a linked incentive model to stimulate a sustainable change in water-consumption behaviour.

Health

[Action needed to protect EU's most vulnerable citizens from air pollution, noise and extreme temperatures](#)

Targeted action is needed to better protect the poor, the elderly and children from environmental hazards like air and noise pollution and extreme temperatures. A European Environment Agency (EEA) report warns that the health of Europe's most vulnerable citizens remains disproportionately affected by these hazards, despite overall improvements in Europe's environmental quality.

Microplastics

[EU moves to ban microplastics in most products - An invisible problem six times bigger than Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#)

The EU plan to use powerful chemical laws to stop most microplastics and microbeads being added to cosmetics, paints, detergents, some farm, medical and other products.

Sustainable Development

[Engaging territories towards sustainable development: international action of local governments](#)

Local and regional governments have a role to play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. All of the 17 SDGs have local targets, which makes it a relevant framework to implement political strategies at local level. Local and regional governments are at the core of the SDGs localising process of which main feature is to assert that territorial solutions will be found to address global challenges and to allow a sustainable development everywhere and for all.

Brexit: *Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).*